

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Ethos at the Periphery: Speakerly and Writerly Persuasions in U.S. Minority Literatures Since 1945

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/17q5c42g>

Author

Valella, Daniel

Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Ethos at the Periphery:
Speakerly and Writerly Persuasions in U.S. Minority Literatures Since 1945

By

Daniel Valella

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Scott Saul, Chair

Professor Bryan Wagner

Professor Mel Y. Chen

Spring 2019

Abstract

Ethos at the Periphery:
Speakerly and Writerly Persuasions in U.S. Minority Literatures Since 1945

by

Daniel Valella

Doctor of Philosophy in English

with a

Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Scott Saul, Chair

This dissertation examines the complex models of rhetorical *ethos* that minority writers and their literary speakers have developed to persuade diverse audiences to join them in resisting structural oppressions and creating more reciprocal forms of affiliation in the post-1945 United States.

While authoritarian politicians, from Adolf Hitler to Donald Trump, have aimed to consolidate mass audiences through the power of scapegoating and the deployment of “alternative facts,” writers such as Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Gordon Henry, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Sherman Alexie have worked to cultivate a different, more flexible and horizontal relationship between writer and reader, or speaker and listener, through distinctive techniques in their fiction. These writers (along with their narrators, poetic speakers, and dramatis personae) forge connections with audiences through verbal expressions that illuminate shared rituals, iconographies, spiritual beliefs, locations, and ethical values—expressions, I argue, that represent neither a return to reason and rationality nor an accentuation of affect and sentimentality. In this way, literary works like Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Baldwin’s *Blues for Mister Charlie*, Henry’s *The Light People*, Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, and Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* offer antiracist and queer revisions of Aristotle’s ancient theory of rhetorical *ethos* (persuasion through “character”), setting *ethos* as a vital alternative to *logos* (persuasion through reason) or *pathos* (persuasion through emotion).

Each of my four chapters analyzes a particular element of *ethos* and its development in one or more works of U.S. minority literature. Chapter 1, “*Ethos* as *Consubstantiality*,” explores the close relationship between Ellison and the rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke, illuminating their mutual effort to figure out how humans could use language to keep their communities intact and to prevent a resurgence of the scapegoating, violence, and genocide that typified Nazism and fascism during World War II. I argue that their respective books *Invisible Man* (1952) and *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950)—which the two men wrote while in frequent conversation—together draw upon Aristotle’s rhetorical theory to conceptualize a new form of *ethos* for the mid-twentieth century. Calling it “consubstantiality,” an “accord of sensibilities,” Burke and Ellison believed that this new form of *ethos*—a rhetoric that emphasizes the symbolic and stylistic “oneness” of speaker and audience—

would allow members of differently positioned groups to communicate effectively across their social divides.

Chapter 2, “*Ethos as Spi/rituality*,” examines the central courtroom scenes of Baldwin’s *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964) and Henry’s *The Light People* (1994) to showcase the potentials of *ethos* for African American and Native American witnesses testifying in courts of law. Disapproving of both the purportedly *logos*-based realm of the law and the *pathos*-based realm of sentimental literature, Baldwin hoped that the space of the theater could create a sense of “ritual” and “spiritual communion” that led to social change. Similarly, Henry’s work critiques the normative rhetorics of U.S. settler-colonial law, satirizing the emotional appeals that attorneys use to win over judges and juries, and revealing what happens when legal “rules” and “rationality” are taken to such an extreme that they allow the bones and spirits of deceased Native Americans to be exhumed and repossessed by scientists and curators, who treat them as “objects” to adorn the walls of natural history museums.

Chapter 3, “*Ethos as Com-position*,” probes the deep connections between “attitude” and “location”—connections that the term “*ethos*” encapsulates and that we can see quite clearly in English word pairs like *habit/habitat*, *civil/civic*, and *propriety/property*. In this vein, Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), along with a number of her other writings, conceives of *ethos* as a complex queer mode of “dwelling” that occurs through shifting artistic language, rather than in a stable geographic space. Straddling national borders and moving constantly from place to place, Anzaldúa’s narrators challenge the emphasis that feminist theories of “standpoint” and “postpositivist realism” put on “where one is speaking from,” by inviting readers to “be at home with them” not in a shared physical territory but, instead, on a shared book-page and in shared conversation. What creates, revivifies, and sustains community in *Borderlands* are the shared identifications that emerge through an *ethos*-based rhetoric of *location*, rather than (as some readers might expect) affinities based on a shared racial, gender, and/or sexual identity.

Finally, Chapter 4, “*Ethos as Ethics*,” takes Alexie’s young adult novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) as a case study for exploring the *ethics* of social communication, of literary narration, and of literary criticism. *The Absolutely True Diary*’s form and narration directly concern, and even emphasize, ethical questions: about the relationship between speech and disability, about adults’ power over young people, about toxic masculinities and internalized homophobias, about addictions, and about the differences in norms and expectations across locations. In doing so, the novel and its young indigenous narrator follow recent contributions to ethical literary criticism in consistently asking us to reflect on what our ethics are and should be, while also challenging us to move away from the fear of disability, of indigeneity, of queer discourse, and of youth that are still all too common in the postwar U.S.

By bringing *ethos* to bear on postwar U.S. minority literatures, this dissertation works to mend longstanding divisions between “literature” and “composition” (and between literary theory and rhetorical theory), considering them as mutually constituting rather than disparate fields and practices. Moreover, it shows how minority speakers’ *ethos*-based appeals (not only in literature—but in law, politics, and many other realms as well) register an effective counter-response to the allure of “alternative facts” and similar rhetorical strategies that seek to reify disfranchisement and violence.

Table of Contents

Introduction	ii
Acknowledgments	xix
Chapter 1: <i>Ethos</i> as <i>Consubstantiality</i> : Ralph Ellison and Kenneth Burke’s Black-and-White “Accord of Sensibilities”	1
Chapter 2: <i>Ethos</i> as <i>Spi/rituality</i> : The Character Witnesses of James Baldwin and Gordon Henry, Jr.	25
Chapter 3: <i>Ethos</i> as <i>Com-position</i> : Gloria Anzaldúa’s Locational Rhetoric of <i>Nos/otras</i>	45
Chapter 4: <i>Ethos</i> as <i>Ethics</i> : How <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> Asks Us Who We Are and Who We Should Be	83
Works Cited	105

Introduction

Now is a particularly important time for everyone—literary theorists and non-literary theorists alike—to return to the possibilities of *ethos*.

In just the past few years, political figures on the right have used a rhetoric of “alternative facts” to great effect: U.S. President Donald Trump’s first White House Press Secretary, Sean Spicer, told the world that Trump enjoyed “the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe,” despite clear photographic evidence that a much larger crowd attended Barack Obama’s first inauguration eight years earlier. Numerous Republican politicians continue to get reelected while denying the veracity or the importance of climate change, despite the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s conclusion that “scientific evidence for warming of the climate system is unequivocal.” A rhetoric that strongly emphasizes “facts” and “reason” simply is not, in our contemporary moment, the most effective. At the same time, political figures on the left who highlight emotional concerns in their own counter-rhetorics—speaking of intergenerational “trauma,” the importance of “self-care,” and the need for spaces in which they and others “feel safe”—almost always lose the cultural and legal battles over “free speech.”

What, then, are the U.S.’s most marginalized subjects to do when they communicate, if neither rational nor affective forms of expression hold sway? How do minority speakers and writers use creative verbal language to forge identifications with diverse audiences—and to convince others to join them in eradicating racism, sexism, homophobia, and other social injustices?

In this dissertation, I turn to the literary and philosophical archives of a number of postwar U.S. minority writers to showcase their and their literary speakers’ deeply generative style of rhetorical resistance and community-formation—a style that deemphasizes the rational and affective registers in favor of a register that is symbolic, ritualistic, spiritual, ethical, and location-driven. Accordingly, I argue, these minority speakers articulate powerful antiracist and queer revisions of Aristotle’s ancient theory of rhetorical *ethos*.

What Is *Ethos*?

Ethos, Aristotle argued in his treatise *On Rhetoric*, is one of three “proofs” that make up an effective speech. The other two proofs are *logos* (the speech’s argumentative logic or rationality) and *pathos* (the speaker’s appeal to the emotions of the audience). *Ethos*, finally, is “persuasion through character,” which Aristotle believes is “the most authoritative form of persuasion.” It emerges when

the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others], on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt. And this should result *from the speech*, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person. (*On Rhetoric* 1.2.4, my emphasis)

By insisting that value judgments come from the speech alone, Aristotle’s ancient theory of *ethos* has a surprisingly poststructuralist cast: it emerges out of language itself, rather than out of a prescribed “identity”—racial, sexual, or otherwise.

Even in classical antiquity, philosophers of rhetoric presented challenges to Aristotle’s theory. As Rosanne Carlo has noted, *ethos* “was seen by some (Plato; Isocrates) as something that was embodied”—“something that precedes speaking”—whereas Aristotle always understood it to be something “constructed, created by words in a speech” (12–13). This centuries-old (and ongoing)

debate over *ethos* dovetails with the many vital debates over human subjectivity: Do humans have “essences,” or are we all “constructs”? Do subjects have a “self” that is stable across times, spaces, and languages—or are subjects inherently defined by “the social and linguistic spaces in which they operate” (Schmertz 85)? Aristotle’s conception of *ethos* aligns more closely with the constructivist and contextual “sides” in these debates, yet it is also insistent on certain types of agency. The artistic expressions that a subject articulates—while they are certainly limited by environmental and other forces in the artist’s life—do constitute “decisions” of a particular kind, and *ethos* emerges both in the “forces” that lead to these decisions and in the effects that these decisions have on a speech (or work of literature), its speaker (or implied author), and its audience. What makes Aristotle’s conception of *ethos* such a rich and generative philosophy for adaptation and revision by minority speakers and writers is its emphasis on such artistic construction, as opposed to essentialist, prelinguistic, and overly deterministic definitions of the speaking subject.

But what exactly does “persuasion through character” mean? And what makes it distinct from persuasion through “reason” or persuasion through “emotion”? A closer look at *ethos*’s etymology will help us to answer these questions. The word “ethos,” in English, is in fact a transliteration of two distinct yet deeply related Ancient Greek terms. With *eta* as its first letter, *ethos* (ἦθος) means “habit,” “custom,” or (most commonly) “character.” With *epsilon* as its first letter, *ethos* (εθος) means “habitat,” “accustomed place,” or “dwelling.” The similarity between the English words “habit” and “habitat” illustrates the powerful relationship between *attitude* and *location* (or between what we “dwell on” and what we “dwell in”). Indeed, we see this same crucial relationship in so many pairs of English words:

<i>habit</i>		<i>habitat</i>
<i>civil</i>		<i>civic</i>
<i>urbane</i>		<i>urban</i>
<i>polite</i>		<i>political</i>
<i>familiar</i>		<i>familial</i>
<i>propriety</i>		<i>property</i>
<i>what we dwell on</i>		<i>what we dwell in</i>

To communicate in a way that foregrounds shared habits, values, and rituals, or shared habitats and dwelling places—even amid our other differences—is to make convincing use of rhetorical *ethos* without necessarily resorting to the kinds of logical (*logos*-based) and sentimental (*pathos*-based) appeals that, for minority speakers in particular, are often ineffective or disallowed.¹ If *logos* is about what we think, and *pathos* is about what we feel, *ethos* is about what we *inhabit*. Put another way: if *logos* primarily addresses the *mind*, and *pathos* primarily addresses the *body*, *ethos* primarily addresses the *spirit*. It is a matter of “character” both in the sense of “good ethical quality” and in the sense of “that which is *characteristic* of a place, a culture, and a community.” The persuasiveness of *ethos* materializes in shared spiritual communion, as opposed to logical agreement or emotional connection.

¹ As S. Michael Halloran notes, “Aristotle’s idea that habituation is the means by which *ethos* develops in the individual suggests a similar explanation for the development of *ethos* in its broader cultural sense: the ritual acts that manifest our group identity or *ethos* are the very same acts that form it. A convention or a colloquium or a seminar is both an expression and a shaping of the professorial *ethos*. We continually teach ourselves what it is to be scholars. [...] Rhetorical choices define the character of the speaker and of the world. We must understand how that happens, and we must help our students to understand too” (63).

Moving Beyond the *Logic/Affect* Binary

It is still quite common, especially in the popular discourse of the West, to frame both the expression and the reception of messages in binary terms: a rhetorical exchange is either “rational” or “emotional,” a matter of “facts” or of “feelings,” an appeal to “reason” or to “sentiment,” emergent from “the head” or “the heart.” This framework essentially ignores *ethos* and its vital role in rhetorical persuasion, reducing meaning-making to matters of *logos* and *pathos* alone. In the 2016 U.S. presidential election, for example, the news media consistently pitted candidates against one another through such a *logic/affect* binary. One can find more than fifteen articles—published in major media outlets between January and June of that year—that use the explicit language of “head” versus “heart” to describe the main difference between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Just before the New Hampshire primary, members of the Clinton campaign told *Politico* that she “was unhappy with the narrative that Sanders was the ‘heart’ candidate people fall in love with, [while] she was the ‘head’ candidate who makes a more practical choice.” At the very same time, Sanders’s precinct captains were exclaiming, verbatim, “vote with your heart, not with your head!” (Karni). Indeed, this binary was so pervasive that Clinton expounded on it at length during the February 4 Democratic debate: “I will bring [...] heart with me” to the presidency, she said, “but I will also tell you we’ve got to get our heads together to come up with the best answers to solve [...] problems so that people can have real differences in their lives.”

Despite the popular obsession with the *head/heart* distinction, new research in sociology and behavioral science continues to point out that political persuasion is most successful when it underscores an “ethical code,” an adherence to shared “values” (Khazan; Feinberg and Willer 1667). One study found that “[c]onservatives were less likely to support Trump if arguments against him were presented in terms of his *patriotism*, rather than a tendency to overlook the marginalized. Liberal participants, meanwhile, were more likely to be swayed by Clinton’s *ties to Wall Street* than by the incident in Benghazi” (Khazan). All of this has to do with the respective values that conservatives and liberals habitually place on particular discourses: the patriotic, the financialist, and so on. Behavioral scientists sometimes call this value-driven persuasive process “moral (re)framing” (Feinberg and Willer 1667), but I prefer the term *ethical* because of its etymological and connotative ties to *ethos*. What matters here are not (supposedly) *universal* goods or evils, but *culturally specific* conceptions of “good” and “evil,” of alliance and opposition—in addition to the symbolic performances of habit and ritual that characterize the spirit of a place or a community. When we reexamine rhetorical processes through the lens of *ethos*, we can avoid the trap of the *logic/affect* binary and gain a more nuanced understanding of persuasive power.

Instead of concluding that Clinton lost the general election primarily because of an “enthusiasm gap”—or that Trump’s victory was due primarily to his “fearmongering,” leveraging “resentment,” or “riling up” his base—we might note that Trump spent quite a bit more time than Clinton in “blue wall” states like Michigan and Pennsylvania, speaking in general terms about the downturn in factory jobs and the pitfalls of the North American Free Trade Agreement, a “characteristic” position held by these states’ residents. Trump, whose campaign manager Kellyanne Conway soon became famous for using the phrase “alternative facts” to describe what are widely acknowledged to be “provable falsehoods” uttered by the Trump White House, rarely emphasized verifiable facts or logical policy ideas in his campaign rhetoric. His oratory is not at all *logos*-driven. Furthermore, few would argue that Trump epitomizes “moral character”; despite Clinton’s shortcomings, she was almost assuredly much more “morally persuasive” on the campaign trail. The distinction between a universalizing conception of “the good” (what is moral) and a particular cultural conception of “the good” (what is ethical) is again helpful here, yet what matters even more in Trump’s rhetorical *ethos* is the force of symbolism, habit, ritual, and location-based claims.

Irrespective of their translation to particular policies, his rhetorical appeals, summarized in the idea that we should “Make America Great Again,” depict a “homeland” that many voters are familiar with, that they hold dear, and that they believe should encapsulate a certain way of life. If this way of life has been lost over the years, they hope it might return if the right person gets elected.

The Fundamental Binary of Aristotle’s *Politics*

If symbol, character, and spirit are so important, where did we get the *logic/affect, head/heart, or mind/body* binary from? Interestingly, it might very well be due to Aristotle himself. The Aristotle who wrote the *Politics* could have learned much from the Aristotle who wrote *On Rhetoric*; the discrepancy between the two may furnish one of the most consequential instances, in the history of philosophy, of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle famously declares that “if something is capable of rational foresight [*dianoia prooran*], it is a natural ruler [*archon physeis*] and master, whereas whatever can use its body to labor [*to somati tauta poiein*] is ruled and is a natural slave [*physei doulon*” (1252a 31–33). This distinction—which Giorgio Agamben spends the first third of his most recent book, *The Use of Bodies*, evaluating—is an early iteration of the most important binary in Aristotelian political theory. In one way or another, the relationship between *ruler* and *ruled* correlates to the relationship between *the intellectual* and *the somatic*. And, while Aristotle takes care to point out that different beings and contexts require different *forms* of governance or rule, he suggests that it is both natural and good for humans to rule non-humans, for free people to rule slaves, for men to rule women, for adults to rule children, and for Greeks to rule non-Greeks (“barbarians”). Aristotle reserves political subjectivity, founded on rational foresight, for humans alone. Many animals have the natural ability to communicate phonically (that is, with *phonē*, or “voice”), to signal pleasure or pain: their bodies are certainly able to feel, but their minds are substantially less able to deliberate. Only humans can go beyond perception of their feelings and into the intellectual realm of sagacity and logical communication (that is, communication with *logos*, or “speech”), which is required for governance in the *polis*, the city-state.

Given his tripartite *rhetorical* theory of persuasion, it is interesting that Aristotle’s *political* theory, at least in its treatment of animality and utterance, is essentially *bipartite*, featuring *logos* as a fundamental element and *pathos* (or, more precisely, the communication of feelings) as its inferior counterpart, while largely leaving *ethos* out of the discussion. To get a better sense of the connection between his *intellectual/somatic* and *logos/pathos* distinctions, let us look at a few passages in the *Politics* that classify sentient beings and forms of rule.

After noting that “Soul [*psyche*] and body [*somatos*] are the basic constituents of an animal; the soul the natural ruler, the body the natural subject” (*Politics* 1254a 34–36), Aristotle dissects the animal more minutely, analogizing its psychosomatic structure to the governmental structure of a city-state:

it is, as I say, in an animal that we can first observe both rule of a master and rule of a statesman. For the soul [*psyche*] rules the body [*somatos*] with the rule of a master [*despotiken archen*], whereas understanding [*nous*] rules desire [*orexeos*] with the rule of a statesman or with the rule of a king [*politiken kai basiliken [archen]*]. In these cases it is evident that is natural and beneficial for the body to be ruled by the soul, and for the affective part [*to pathetiko morio*] to be ruled by understanding (the part that has reason) [*tou nou kai tou moriou tou logon echontos*], and that it would be harmful to everything if the reverse held, or if these elements were equal. The same applies in the case of human beings with respect to the other animals. For domestic animals are

by nature better than wild ones, and it is better for all of them to be ruled by human beings, since this will secure their safety. Moreover, the relation of male to female is that of natural superior to natural inferior, and that of ruler to ruled. But, in fact, the same holds true of all human beings [for example, the relation of Greeks to non-Greeks]. (*Politics* 1254b 3–16)

At this point, Aristotle's theorization becomes quite complex, as his analogy between the animal and the *polis* includes yet another analogy—but *not* a homology or a conflation—between the animal's body and the animal's affect. While he does not immediately elaborate on this particular element of his thinking, he is in fact arguing that the *difference* between “body” and “desire” (or “the affective part”) is precisely what explains and necessitates the difference in the style of rule. At the same time, he is arguing that the *similarity* between “body” and “desire” (or “the affective part”) is what explains and necessitates the similarity of situation between the despotically-ruled and the politically-ruled (or between the despotic ruler and the political ruler). For Aristotle, the soul, the *psyche*, is quite distinct from the body, yet the part of the soul that is affective and that does the “desiring” is much closer to the body—much more responsive to bodily needs, privileging the bodily over the intellectual—than is the part of the soul that is rational and that does the “understanding.” The body itself should be ruled in despotic style, while the part of the soul that privileges the bodily (over the intellectual) should be ruled in political style, but what is even more certainly the case is that both should be ruled—by the non-bodily or the less-bodily, the mental and especially the intellectual. All of this, I think, helps us to understand the relationship between *logos* and *pathos*, even as rhetorical techniques.

It is quite telling that, in the opening chapters of the *Politics*, Aristotle's *ruler* vs. *ruled* binaries shift ever so slightly from productive capability (rational foresight vs. bodily labor) to articulation (*logos*/speech vs. *phōnē*/voice) to constitution (*psyche*/soul vs. *sōma*/body) to thought-process (*nous*/understanding vs. *orexeos*/desire), culminating in a binary whose distinctive terms are exceedingly familiar to any rhetorician: “the part that has reason” (*to morion tou logon echontos*) vs. “the affective part” (*to pathetiko morion*), the *logos* part vs. the *pathos* part. Even as each new iteration of the *ruler/ruled* binary registers a difference in type or application, the left-hand terms are all associated with one another (as rulers), just as the right-hand terms are (as ruled), suggesting that rhetorical *logos* is meant to rule rhetorical *pathos* in some form. Furthermore, while we should not ignore the vast historical distance between Aristotle's articulation of his theories and our present moment, it is worth acknowledging the strong connections between the binary of *logos*-the-ruler and *pathos*-the-ruled that Aristotle sets up in the *Politics* and the connotative disparity between our normative modern uses of the English adjectives “logical” (generally positive) and “pathetic” (generally negative). That these terms are often attached, in a hierarchical manner, to certain species, races, genders, nations, and ages is in many ways an Aristotelian legacy as well. Clarifying his definition of a natural slave, Aristotle writes:

Therefore those people who are as different from others as body is from soul or beast from human, and people whose task, that is to say, the best thing to come from them, is to use their bodies are in this condition—those people are natural slaves. And it is better for them to be subject to this rule, since it is also better for the other things we mentioned. For he who can belong to someone else (and that is why he actually does belong to someone else), and he who shares in reason [*o koinon logou*] to the extent of understanding it [*tosouton oson aisthanesthai*], but does not have it himself [*alla me echein*] (for the other animals obey not reason but feelings) [*ou logou aisthanomena, alla pathemasin uperetei*], is a natural slave. The difference in the use made

of them is small, since both slaves and domestic animals help provide the necessities with their bodies. (*Politics* 1254b 16–25)

Aristotle wants to insist that a natural slave is indeed a human—as opposed to one of “the other animals”—since the slave can perceive (but not possess) *logos* when it is articulated by another human (who has greater intellect), whereas a different kind of animal purportedly cannot even reach the level of *logos*-perception. Non-human animals obey not *logos* but only *pathema*, *pathos*, feelings. What is most fascinating, though, about Aristotle’s distinction here is the fact that he so quickly minimizes it. “The difference in the use” that intellectual, *logos*-possessing humans should make of slaves and other animals “is small,” since the role, in the *polis*, of both types of “ruled” sentient beings is to “help provide the necessities” via bodily labor.

This extraordinary passage of Aristotle’s essentially provides the grounds for Jacques Rancière’s theory of “politics” as a nexus of contestations over the “capacity” of subjects and thus over their roles in the city-state. In *Disagreement*, Rancière argues that Aristotelian “logos is tainted with a primary contradiction. There is order in society because some people command and others obey, but in order to obey an order at least two things are required: you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey it. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you. It is this equality that gnaws away at any natural order” (16). In other words, Aristotle’s “natural slave”—who can “perceive” *logos* but not “possess” it—has room for political resistance, since he must in fact have the higher level of cognition (potentially even foresight) that is required to understand his enduring political role as servant. An Aristotelian political schema, supposedly a “natural” schema, in fact rests on the obedience (or, I would add, the suppression), rather than the differential abilities, of its ruled subjects. As Rancière puts it, “Doubtless inferiors obey 99 percent of the time; it remains that the social order is reduced thereby to its ultimate contingency” (16–17).

But where—amid all this talk of reason and feelings—is the third rhetorical proof, *ethos*, which in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle calls “the most authoritative form of persuasion”? Essentially the only trace of *ethos* in Book I (and one of the few traces of *ethos* in the whole text) of the *Politics* comes when Aristotle writes of different subjects’ “virtues of character.” It appears almost as an afterthought—as a *supposition* about, rather than an “observation” of, the natures of sentient beings:

The deliberative part of the soul is entirely missing from a slave; a woman has it but it lacks authority; a child has it but it is incompletely developed. We must suppose, therefore, that the same necessarily holds of the virtues of character [*ethikas aretas*] too: all must share in them, but not in the same way; rather, each must have a share sufficient to enable him to perform his own task [*ergon*]. Hence a ruler must have virtue of character complete [*telean echein dei ten ethiken areten*], since his task is unqualifiedly that of a master craftsman, and reason [*logos*] is a master craftsman, but each of the others must have as much as pertains to him. It is evident, then, that all those mentioned have virtue of character [*ethike arete*], and that temperance, courage, and justice of a man are not the same as those of a woman, as Socrates supposed: the one courage is that of a ruler, the other that of an assistant, and similarly in the case of the other virtues too. (1260a 11–22)

If Rancière sees a “contingency” in the *logos* of the *Politics*, whereby the separation between ruler and ruled in fact relies upon the obedience (or suppression) of the latter, *ethos* appears here to be part of a fundamental contingency as well. As Aristotle says, “We must *suppose*” that ethical virtues, virtues of character, are differentially distributed among political subjects according to these subjects’

positioning within the correlated *ruler/ruled*, *logical/affective*, and *intellectual/somatic* binaries. If a subject’s “task” in the *polis* is to perform intellectual labor, to govern himself and others, and to work with the “deliberative part” of the soul, this subject *therefore* “must have virtue of character complete.” On the other hand, if a subject’s political “task” is to perform bodily labor, to be an “assistant” to the rulers, or to work with the “nonrational” and affective part of the soul, this subject requires only partial virtue of character—whatever enables her to complete her proper task. Is it impossible, though, for a ruler to be ill-willed or unvirtuous? Can a ruled subject possess “virtue of character complete”? These questions are, in fact, what the last section of Book I of the *Politics* intends to answer. But, remarkably, whereas Aristotle’s previous discussions begin by assessing a sentient being’s “nature” and later use this assessment to assign a political role to the being, this concluding section of Book I does the opposite. It begins with the role, the “task,” that already has been assigned to a sentient being and infers from this role something about the being’s “nature”—that is, the being’s virtue of character—that had not been discussed before. Here, Aristotle’s repetition of “*must have*” soon morphs into the phrase “*are not the same as*,” revealing a slippage from a syllogistic discussion of job requirements to a circular reasoning about natural traits. What would happen if a woman, a child, a slave, or a foreigner were to demonstrate all the virtues of character associated with a ruler? And how exactly would this demonstration occur?

While most English translators of the *Politics* interpret “*logos*” as “reason” in this passage about virtues of character, we of course cannot lose sight of the fact that, throughout this text, “*logos*” also means “speech,” indicating a *rhetorical* imperative for those whose task in the *polis* is to govern (including in the sense of *self-governance*). When we also take note of the traces of *pathos* (in the “affective” part of the soul) and *ethos* (in character virtues), we see even more clearly the ways in which Aristotle’s tripartite theory of persuasion in the *Rhetoric* collides with his theory of government in the *Politics*. But the political theory remains essentially *bipartite*—centered on a binary relation between, on the one hand, the ruling *logos*-as-reason and its associates (intellect, speech, foresight) and, on the other hand, the ruled *pathos*-as-feeling and its associates (body, voice, desire). When *ethos* comes into the fold, not through an “observation” of but through a “supposition” about the natures of sentient beings, it gets distributed across the bipartite political theory to adhere to normative presumptions.

the ruler / natural master

rational foresight
logos (“speech”)
psyche (“soul”)
nous (“understanding”)
 the part that has reason (*tou logon echontos*)
 rhetorical *logos*

the ruled / natural slave

bodily labor
phonē (“voice”)
soma (“body”)
orexeos (“desire”)
 the affective part (*to pathetiko morio*)
 communicative *pathos*

[----- rhetorical & communicative *ethos* -----]

Accordingly, *ethos* in the *Politics* is never really subsumable under either side of the *logic/affect* or *intellectual/somatic* binaries, just as in the *Rhetoric* it remains a third mode of persuasion, distinct from *logos* and *pathos*. This positioning of *ethos* across, beyond, or outside the bipartite naturalization Aristotle constructs in the *Politics*, coupled with his polyvalent conception of *logos* as both “speech” and “reason,” leaves room for resistance through rhetoric.

As long as subjects are not totally silenced—by exile, incapacitation, death, or anything else—they might be able to persuade their way into a (self-)governing position by showcasing exceptional virtue of character. Or, more pragmatically, they might be able to alleviate their marginalization by performing what Rancière calls “politics,” a rhetorical act that makes their

utterances recognizable as speech, without remaining (as Rancière also suggests they do) in the realm of “logical proofs.” That is, these subjects could emphasize the ethical, spiritual, character-driven, symbolic, and not fully provable elements of speech and persuasion—which Aristotle lumps into *ethos*, “the most authoritative form” of rhetoric—over both a “subservient” *pathos* and the logical, rational, data-driven, scientific, or thoroughly provable elements that constitute rhetorical *logos*.

The Aristotelian Americas

Why give so much attention to Aristotle in a study of post-1945 U.S. minority literatures? It is not simply that communicative *ethos*, so important to these literatures, first received robust theoretical treatment in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. It is also that Aristotle’s claims in the *Politics* about “natural rulers” (owners and practitioners of *logos*) and “natural slaves” (users of their bodies, who act according to what they feel) have massively influenced the subjectivation of racial minorities in America, from the moment Columbus “discovered the New World” all the way up to the present. I want to take a moment to share three historical examples: (1) the Valladolid Debate in the 1550s, between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, over the question of a “just war against the Indians” by Spanish colonizers in the New World; (2) the debate between abolitionists and advocates of chattel slavery in the late eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries; and (3) the debate, begun in the early nineteenth centuries and still today being argued, between promoters of *classical education* and promoters of *industrial education* in the schooling of nonwhite youth. All three of these debates, which in large part concern the rhetorical capabilities of nonwhite subjects in America, reify the Aristotelian political binary of intellectual *logos* and somatic *pathos*. If we wish to understand how U.S. minority writers have pushed against a dominant discourse that frames them as lesser, we need to understand the contours of this discourse—contours rooted in Aristotelian political philosophy.

Spanish Colonizers, Indigenous Peoples, and Politics in the New World, 1542–1559

In the Valladolid Debate, Sepúlveda and Las Casas framed their discussions of indigenous American personhood and governance precisely in Aristotelian political-theoretical terms. In the six years leading up to the debate, Sepúlveda wrote (and gave lectures based on) the book *Democrates secundus*, whose structure closely imitates the form of the literary-philosophical *dialogue* favored by ancient rhetoricians like Plato and Cicero, as well as by a number of Sepúlveda’s Renaissance contemporaries, including Baldassare Castiglione and Desiderius Erasmus. That so many intellectuals in Early Modern Europe found a renewed interest in Ancient Greek and Roman works at the same time that they (or their “explorer” compatriots) began to colonize the lands of the Americas makes it all the more clear how vital Aristotelian theories were in the creation of the first Euro-American governmental structures and, accordingly, in the subjectivation and subjection of these lands’ indigenous peoples.

Democrates, the main interlocutor in *Democrates secundus* (and nearly a stand-in for Sepúlveda himself), quotes and paraphrases Book I of Aristotle’s *Politics* at length, adding comments about how brutish indigenous Americans seem to him to be, and claiming that the Spaniards are obligated to “civilize” them. Democrates consistently refers to indigenous Americans as “barbarians,” adopting while also expanding the meaning of Aristotle’s term for non-Greeks. If we remember that Aristotle says in the *Politics* that non-Greeks, *barbarous*, “do not have anything that naturally rules,” and so “non-Greek and slave are in nature the same,” we can understand how Democrates arrives at the conclusion that “the Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as

children to adults, or women to men, for there exists between the two as great a difference as between savage and cruel races and the most merciful, between the most intemperate and the moderate and temperate and, I might even say, between apes and men” (Sepúlveda 526–27). After noting that “philosophers see slavery as inferior intelligence along with inhuman and barbarous customs,” Democrates says, “Those who surpass the rest in prudence and talent, although not in physical strength, are by nature the masters. Those, on the other hand, who are retarded or slow to understand, although they may have the physical strength necessary for the fulfillment of all their necessary obligations, are by nature slaves, and it is proper and useful that they be so, for we even see it sanctioned in divine law itself.” (Sepúlveda 525). Of course, this dyad of “intelligence” (or mental strength) and bodily use (or “physical strength”), as it attaches to the roles of the rulers and the ruled in a political society, is as Aristotelian as it gets.

In his moral, religious, and philosophical objections to Sepúlveda, Las Casas could have argued that an Aristotelian approach to colonization and conversion was non-Catholic and thereby unwarranted, but the friar chose instead to maintain Aristotle’s political philosophy—contending that Sepúlveda misunderstood the theories in the *Politics*, as well as their proper application to Spanish rule in the New World. Like Democrates and Sepúlveda, Las Casas largely sticks to the *intellectual/somatic* binary and its correlation to the rulers and the ruled, but he suggests that many indigenous Americans belong on the left-hand and not the right-hand side of the dyad. In the *Apologetic History of the Indies*, likely penned between 1551 and 1559, Las Casas explains, “It has been written that these people of the Indies, lacking human governance and ordered nations, did not have the power of reason to govern themselves—which was inferred only from their having found to be gentle, patient and humble” (530). To combat this argument of Sepúlveda’s, Las Casas spends a great deal of time making the case that Native Americans indeed possess “rational souls,” rather than souls overtaken by emotions and appetites (530). Injecting into this Aristotelian binary more modern tenets of Catholicism and geographic determinism, he says of the natives he has encountered:

all are by nature of very subtle, lively, clear and most capable understanding. This they received (after the will of God, Who wished to create them in this way) from the favorable influence of the heavens, the gentle attributes of the regions which God gave them to inhabit, the clement and soft weather; from the composition of their limbs and internal and external sensory organs; from the quality and sobriety of their diet; from the fine disposition and healthfulness of the lands, towns and local winds; from their temperance and moderation in food and drink; from the tranquility, calmness and quiescence of their sensual desires; from their lack of concern and worry over the worldly matters that stir the passions of the soul, these being joy, love, wrath, grief and the rest; and also, *a posteriori*, from the works they accomplished and the effects of these. [...Thus] they were endowed with the three types of prudence: the monastic, by which man knows how to rule himself; the economic, which teaches him to rule his house; and the political, which sets forth and ordains the rule of his cities. (Las Casas 533)

Here, Las Casas writes primarily about minds and bodies, as well as of decisions that are *logos*-based and *pathos*-based. “Understanding” pervades Amerindian society, with reason overtaking “sensual desires,” tempering “the passions of the soul,” moderating intake of “food and drink,” and maintaining naturally healthy (but not slavishly strong) bodies through a high-quality diet. The stair-step trio of governance—of the self, of the household, and of the *polis*—that he claims to witness in

indigenous American life comes directly from the *Politics* and is therefore reducible to “endowed prudence,” a function of *logos*.

Furthermore, Las Casas never challenges Aristotle’s conception of the “barbarian”; he merely says that Sepúlveda and Democrates misunderstand that conception—and that Native Americans do not deserve the “barbarian” label. In Las Casas’s view, the type of *barbarous* to which Aristotle refers “in the *Politics*, Book I, Chaps. II and V, where it says that they are slaves by nature,” are subjects “not governed by reason,” who “do not possess or administer law, justice or communities. Nor do they cultivate friendship or conversation with other men, for which they have no villages, townships or cities since they do not live in a society” (535–36). Indigenous Americans are not “barbarians,” Las Casas concludes, “because they have their kingdoms and kings,” “they live under laws,” and “in administering justice they prejudice no one” (539). Such forms of political organization, which serve as “proof” of the natives’ humanity and civilization, themselves require proper communication—not only of the logistical and transactional variety but also of the “gregarious” kind, which includes the cultivation of “friendship” and amicable “conversation” with others. On the one hand, Las Casas here is quite clearly upholding the structures and definitions that Aristotle lays out in the *Politics*. On the other hand, when we read between the lines, we can see how Las Casas is implying (perhaps without realizing it) that the skillful use of *rhetoric*—especially rhetoric of the affiliative, spiritual, and ethical sort, indicative of *ethos*—is what makes certain subjects worthy of freedom and self-governance.

The debate between Sepúlveda and Las Casas, which in the end led to no clear verdict or resolution, never questioned the primacy of Aristotelian political theory and its overarching *logos-the-ruler/pathos-the-ruled* binary. Both men reduced all the complex habits, behaviors, and forms of dwelling of indigenous Americans to examples either of “reasoned deliberation” or “insatiable passion.” Where the two men disagreed was on the capabilities of Native Americans and, even more so, on the appropriate moral, religious, and political role of Spanish evangelists in the New World. A nationalist, Sepúlveda took no issue with the abrogation of indigenous sovereignty and pointed to multiple written sources as justification for conquest through “war.” Las Casas, in contrast, rejected the argument for military force, claiming Spaniards’ only proper duty in America was “conversion by means of persuasion and reason”—the duty, one might say, less of a ruler with subjects and more of a rhetorician with listeners (Phelan 99). Any commendation of Las Casas for his work should result from his insistence on communication, rather than war, in interactions between Spaniards and Native Americans. He could have done more to include the voices of indigenous peoples in his accounts, to reject all forms of colonialism, and to defend the rights of black subjects who at the very same time were slaves in the New World, too.

Finally, in chiefly upholding the *Politics*’s *intellectual/somatic* binary favored by Sepúlveda, Las Casas did little to shift the deep-seated Aristotelianism of Europe in the “Age of Discovery” from a binary-political to a tripartite-rhetorical approach toward non-European subjects (or to dispense with Aristotle entirely). We must not underestimate the legacy of the Valladolid debate in this regard. From the very beginning, Native Americans and African Americans—that is, not indigenous, “red,” or black people themselves but indigenous and black people *as subjects in an America colonized by Europeans*—were positioned in an Aristotelian political frame. Although Las Casas may have believed that many of these subjects did not belong in the camp of *pathos*, the somatic, and the “naturally ruled” within this frame, he kept the frame intact. In the centuries since (amid changes in demographics, technology, and government, and even in a United States whose dominant political structure has always been Anglophone), this Aristotelian binary—with its particular attachments to white, black, and indigenous American subjects—has held.

African Americans as Chattel: Defenders & Abolitionists, 1797–1865

In the antebellum U.S. South, where chattel slavery had so many defenders, the *Politics* came to represent a longstanding and respected apologia for a binary system of rulers, who command, and their subjects, who obey. Although, as Steven Mailloux points out, nearly all of these southern defenders added to Aristotle's political theory a newer form of racism that correlated intellectual inferiority (and somatic fitness for manual labor) with the specific "mark" of blackness, they held fast to the general claim that souls and bodies were "designed by nature" to align with particular "tasks" in the *polis* (104–05). In 1850, between stints as the president of the University of Mississippi and a professor of history and literature at the University of Virginia, George Frederick Holmes published an article in the *Southern Literary Messenger* titled "Observations on a Passage in the Politics of Aristotle Relative to Slavery." In it, Holmes declared, "The virtues of the Negro are the virtues of Slavery, and become vices when his condition is changed. The virtues of the Caucasian unfit him for Slavery" (200). Holmes and many other proslavery writers in the mid-nineteenth century agreed with Sepúlveda that slave status was fundamentally natural, rather than legal. Because positive laws could never change the slavish "nature" of black subjects, they argued, abolition was a silly endeavor.

Similarly, the social theorist George Fitzhugh correlated white, black, and indigenous humans to different kinds of non-human animals, according to a bizarre scale of sociability and labor capacity. Clearly influenced by Aristotle's *Politics*, which he had discussed at length in an article published the year before, Fitzhugh wrote in 1858 that "[w]hite men and blooded horses" alike "delight in moderate labor; indeed, there is always danger of their overworking themselves and injuring their health thereby" (663). On the other hand, some species are "irreclaimably wild. Among beasts and birds this class is called animals '*feræ naturæ*.' Indians are men '*feræ naturæ*.' They never can be permanently tamed, domesticated, or civilized. [...] Mules and negroes are an intermediate class, who can only be *half* tamed, domesticated, civilized, and enslaved. Hardy in constitution, strong in body, and capable of much labor, they are nonetheless invaluable for coarse, common work" (Fitzhugh 662–663). Ultimately, Fitzhugh argued that certain types of white men—whose intellect is marginal, whose bodies are capable, but whose obedience is first-rate—in fact make the best slaves of all. But unlike white subjects, black subjects, in Fitzhugh's view, should *never* be free. He even went so far as to send Frederick Douglass a copy of his book *Sociology for the South*, including "a personally inscribed argument that Douglass and his fellow freemen should be immediately and beneficently reenslaved" (Mailloux 109).

It is worth remembering that Douglass, in his 1845 autobiographical *Narrative*, credits the introductory section of Caleb Bingham's popular text *The Columbian Orator* (1797) as foundational to his self-education and ensuing escape from slavery. The written, narrative example of a slave who persuaded his master to free him after saying "some very smart as well as impressive things" inspired Douglass to follow suit (Douglass 50). He recognized the central *intellectual/somatic* binary of the *Politics* and its modern elaborations (including purported justifications for chattel slavery in the Bible), and he satirized such thinking in his work. As Mailloux points out, Douglass referred to Paul's admonition "Servants, obey your masters" in a very popular 1846 speech that "skillfully mimicked Southern preachers" (110). Pretending to address a crowd of American slaves, Douglass sarcastically pontificated, "Oh! Blessed is God, in providing one class of men to do the work, and the other to think" (472). From the 1840s onward, Douglass insisted that learning to *read and write* was the key to his own freedom, from enslavement both mental and legal. The extent to which he deployed an Aristotelian conception of rhetorical *ethos* in his many speeches and writings is a subject outside the bounds of this dissertation, but he clearly understood the pitfalls of the *Politics's intellectual/somatic* binary and its pervasive modern attachments to black subjects. From firsthand

experience, Douglass knew that an education in reading, composition, and high-order thought was indispensable for African Americans, who for so long had been barred from such learning. The federal abolition of chattel slavery may have come with the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, but the curse of educational segregation remained. The effort to break it continues to this day.

Schooling Youth of Color: "Industrial" vs. "Classical" Education, 1836–Present

"After the war and emancipation," writes W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, "the great form of Frederick Douglass, the greatest of American Negro leaders, still led the host. Self-assertion, especially in political lines, was the main programme" (29). But, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a "new leader" came onto the scene: "Booker T. Washington," Du Bois tells us, "arose as essentially the leader not of one race but of two,—a compromiser between the South, the North, and the Negro. Naturally the Negroes resented, at first bitterly, signs of compromise which surrendered their civil and political rights, even though this was to be exchanged for larger chances of economic development" (29–30). Here, Du Bois is referring to Washington's "programme of industrial education," a model of schooling for black (and other nonwhite) youth that heavily emphasized manual labor over "book-learning" (25, 5). If the American version of Aristotle's political theory insisted, as Douglass noted, that white subjects should "think" and nonwhite subjects should "work" with their bodies, Washington followed that prevailing logic and developed a program of industrial education out of it. As Du Bois puts it, "Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races," "opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds," and takes "a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life" (30, 35). While an education in industries and trades does not by definition need to deemphasize humanistic, social scientific, or text-based pedagogy, Washington made clear his belief in "the dignity, the beauty and civilizing power of intelligent labor with the hand"—a power that he claimed to have experienced firsthand as a student of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia.

The man who founded Hampton in 1868 was former Union Army colonel Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who wrote that the institute's mission was to teach black youth "respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands, and to those ends to build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self-support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character" (Talbot 157). Hampton's founder was an important mentor to Washington, who said African Americans "can never cease to be grateful to General Armstrong for all that he did for my people and for American civilization" (qtd. in Okiihiro 117). Armstrong's influence is palpable in Washington's language, as both men use the term "intelligent labor" to describe work with "the hand." The Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, which Washington founded in 1881 on the Armstrong pedagogical model, therefore shared with Hampton the idea that the *somatic* somehow could bear the traits of its binary opposite in the Aristotelian political binary—the *intellectual*. In addition, both educators refer to a learning objective of "dignity" or "character," suggesting *ethos*; however, such a virtue would seem to emerge from the students' use of bodies, not from their use of words.

As Gary Okiihiro has pointed out, Armstrong had a great deal of experience with similar styles of schooling as a young man in Hawai'i, where his parents were missionaries. Armstrong's mother and father both viewed native Hawaiians essentially as barbarians in the Aristotelian sense. Clarissa Chapman Armstrong described the indigenous youth of the islands as "dark, degraded humanity," "given over to animal lusts and selfish degradation," while her husband told the Hawaiian king's minister of foreign relations in 1846 that "an effort should be made to connect some sort of manual labor, especially agriculture, with all the schools. Early habits of industry will [...] remove the temptation to wander about and commit crime in order to get money or fine dress"

(qtd. in Okiihiro 98, 103). While some of the first missionary schools for indigenous students in Hawai'i and in the U.S. focused quite a bit of time on literacy, in part to "perpetuate the faith" through Bible study, manual and industrial education quickly became a model of choice for Christians who sought to "civilize the natives." Okiihiro notes that Samuel Armstrong's father "stressed agriculture ('proper' land use) for boys and homemaking (preparation for motherhood) for girls," thereby reinforcing "heteronormativity and domesticity" and schooling native Hawaiians "for subservience" (103, 108, 114). In other words, the Armstrongs and other missionaries largely confined indigenous boys to the *ergon* of Aristotle's "natural slaves," who primarily "use their bodies to labor," and indigenous girls to the *oikos* and not the *polis*—that is, to the non-political sphere of the household. "Educators" of this ilk further reiterated Aristotle's *Politics* by claiming that Hawaiians were mostly incapable of *logos* or high-order cognition. David Belden Lyman, the missionary who in 1836 founded the Hilo Boarding School for boys, believed (according to fundraising and commemorative pamphlets for the school) that "manual training has always been its strongest feature," since "Hawaiian youth in their natural uncultured state" required "mental and moral furnishing" and benefitted most from "wholesome physical training in the ways of social and civilized life." The second pamphlet, celebrating the school's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1917, explained that nothing could induce Lyman "to contribute one jot towards feeding the vanity, and puffing up the infantile and chaotic mind of the Hawaiian as he then was, by imparting to him a shallow smattering of things too high for him" (qtd. in Okiihiro 111).

The cultivation of a sort of bodily and obedient work ethic—rather than of critical thinking, reasoning, and communication skills—was the true goal of Armstrong's nineteenth-century Hampton, whose most illustrious graduate, Booker T. Washington, carried the mission forward once again. It is almost stunning that Washington lauded Armstrong as an advocate for African Americans, given that Armstrong repeatedly spoke of black and indigenous subjects the way Aristotle speaks in the *Politics* of "barbarians" and "natural slaves." Over and over again, Armstrong claimed that "the darker races" were naturally devoid of virtue, character, and good habits—and that only the use of their bodies would enable such subjects to contribute socially, economically, and politically. "The negro and the Polynesian have many striking similarities," Armstrong wrote in the early 1880s. "Of both it is true that not mere ignorance, but deficiency of character is the chief difficulty, and that to build up character is the true objective point in education." Of course, he was not referring to the study of philosophy, literature, or ethics. Rather, Armstrong contended that "morality and industry generally go together. Especially in the weak tropical races, idleness, like ignorance, breeds vice" (qtd. in Okiihiro 114). If, as Aristotle suggests in Book I of the *Politics*, natural slaves are those whose bodily labor is their primary value to the *polis*, and so these subjects require not "virtue of character complete" but merely whatever virtue is sufficient to complete their "proper task," Armstrong placed his black and indigenous students in this camp and sought to "educate" them accordingly. (It is hardly a surprise, then, that Richard Henry Pratt, an Armstrong disciple who founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania in 1879, is most famous for these nine words that outlined his pedagogical approach to every student: "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man" (Prucha 260–61).)

Adapting, like Sepúlveda, an Aristotelian notion of *barbarous*, Armstrong claimed that "[n]o people ever emerged from barbarism that did not emerge through labor," and so it was "to this labor system closely and faithfully applied from the outset, both to Negroes and Indians, that we owe to a great extent the character of our graduates" (qtd. in Okiihiro 122–23). Armstrong's conception of "character," then, had to do with somatic performance and obedience of commands. It certainly included nothing like persuasion through words, the way Aristotle conceived of "character" or *ethos* in the *Rhetoric*. In fact, Armstrong essentially divulged that his mission of industrial education was the binary opposite of speaking and writing. "The temporal salvation of the

colored race, for some time to come, is to be won out of the ground,” Armstrong wrote in his 1871 principal’s report. “Skillful agriculturists and mechanics are needed, rather than poets and orators” (Johnston 56). As Du Bois made clear in his rebuke of Washington, the particular model of industrial education that pervaded late nineteenth– and early twentieth–century black and indigenous American student life might have led some to economic security, but this end came by means of dispossessing such students of political rights. Not only were youth of color confined to roles of manual labor, in a post-Reconstruction era of disfranchisement; they also were deprived of exercises in developing a consciousness and a language with which to assert and protect their rights as free citizens.

While many institutes like Hampton have become, under less racist control, “historically black colleges and universities” that today reemphasize academic instruction in the arts and sciences, industrial education is far from a thing of the distant past. The Canadian government did not shut down its largely industrial “residential school” system for First Nations youth until 1996, and, in the U.S., a number of Native American boarding schools built on the Pratt and Armstrong models still operate to this day. Furthermore, U.S. colleges (in which black men make up 2.5 percent of undergraduates but 56 percent of football teams and 61 percent of men’s basketball teams) in some cases perpetuate an Aristotelian political value system that develops certain students’ somatic labor much more than their intellectual labor—and, in the culture at large, athletic programs, technical schools, and the military often focus their recruitment efforts on minority teens and young adults (Harper; Lutz). Of course, there are many ways to make a living and find success through industrial or physical labor, and I do not wish to reify the Aristotelian political theory that classifies such labor as slavish. But the fact remains that, throughout America’s history, modern iterations of the *Politics*’s binary division between the *somatic* and the *intellectual* have served to enslave, devalue, and delimit the lives of minority subjects—while the development of skills in reading, writing, and argumentation has been, and continues to be, essential to the practice of freedom and (self-) governance.

If an America deeply adherent to Aristotelian political theory treats racial minorities as mainly incapable of *logos*, while also associating *pathos* with “natural slaves” and others who supposedly cannot govern themselves, *ethos* (“the most authoritative form of persuasion”) can be considered a kind of rhetorical *third way*, avoiding the trap of the *logos/pathos* or *intellectual/somatic* binary. By emphasizing character, symbol, spirit, ritual, habit/at, and ethics over “reason” and “affect,” *ethos*-based expression—especially through literature—better empowers minority speakers, even when the conditions are dire. Subjects marginalized by the practical effects of Aristotle’s political theory are able, by adopting and adapting the *rhetorical* theory, to ameliorate or even escape some of the injuries of settler colonialism and white supremacy.

The Four Overlapping Components of *Ethos*

I have organized the following chapters around what I call the four overlapping (yet analytically distinct) components of *ethos*. They are: *consubstantiality*, *spi/rituality*, *com-position*, and *ethics*. Each chapter focuses on one of these components, as it is both theorized and practiced by minority speakers and writers in the post-1945 U.S. While the continuing legacy of the Aristotelian political subjectivation that we have just discussed remains quite clear in this postwar context, there also have been important innovations in communication technologies, in conceptions of the nation, in rhetorical theory, and in literary expression that make the period from World War II to the present particularly ripe for an analysis of “*ethos* at the periphery.” Adolf Hitler’s ability to rouse the German public with his symbolic and scapegoating oratory—widely disseminated by radio and television, in addition to older media—is one particularly important example, as it led to a type and scale of social stratification and violence that had never been seen before. As many observers have noted, Hitler’s

oratory (if not his authorization of genocide) often bears quite a bit of resemblance to Trump's. Its particular techniques of persuasion also went largely under the radar for many years, even as some U.S. intellectuals like Kenneth Burke tried to caution the public about them. How do minority speakers and writers in an increasingly diverse U.S.—who are so often prone to targeting, to false accusations, and to ostracism—develop their own rhetorical techniques to resist and to regain some freedom and safety? What might *literature* enable that other venues of expression cannot?

Chapter 1, “*Ethos as Consubstantiality: Ralph Ellison and Kenneth Burke’s Black-and-White ‘Accord of Sensibilities,’*” explores the close relationship between Burke and Ellison to show how their respective books *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) and *Invisible Man* (1952)—which the two men wrote while in frequent conversation—together draw upon Aristotle’s rhetorical theory to conceptualize a modern form of *ethos* that allows members of differently positioned groups to communicate effectively across their social divides. Between 1945 and 1948, Burke and Ellison exchanged a number of lengthy letters, in a mutual attempt to figure out how humans could use language to keep their communities intact and to prevent a resurgence of the scapegoating, violence, and genocide that typified Nazism and fascism around the time of the Second World War. Ultimately, they agreed that an *ethos*-based accord of artistic style or symbolism, without resorting to a flattening of real material disparities, could enhance the accord of cultural and ethical sensibilities among differently racialized Americans.

Burke summarized this position in his scholarly theory of “consubstantiality,” which he calls the rhetorical appeal of “identification.” As he explains it, “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. [...] In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives” (*Motives* 20–21). According to the framework of *consubstantiality*, a speaker identifies—“characterizes”—something for the audience, who in turn identifies *with*—associates with—that something and with the speaker himself. For years, Ellison had been arguing that the greatest challenge for black writers was to enable large numbers of American readers to “see themselves in” their black compatriots. Accordingly, he believed that a form of rhetoric and narration that symbolically emphasized an “accord of sensibilities” among differently racialized Americans would prove the best remedy. His conversations with Burke in the 1940s, I argue, deeply informed Burke’s theory of consubstantiality in the landmark text that is *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Very soon thereafter, of course, Ellison penned a landmark text of his own. In *Invisible Man*, his unnamed African American narrator puts the theory of consubstantiality into novelistic practice—testing, tweaking, and regenerating it, on both the inner level of the plot and the outer level of the narration.

Chapter 2, “*Ethos as Spi/rituality: The Character Witnesses of James Baldwin and Gordon Henry, Jr.,*” examines the central courtroom scenes of Baldwin’s 1964 play *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Henry’s 1994 multi-genre book *The Light People* to showcase the potentials of rhetorical *ethos* for African American and Native American witnesses testifying in courts of law. Deeply frustrated by the constant acquittals of white men who killed black Americans in the period between World War II and the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement, Baldwin decided to “retry” a murder case of this kind, relocating the trial from a “real” courtroom to a theatrical stage. Disapproving of both the purportedly *logos*-based realm of the law and the *pathos*-based realm of sentimental literature, Baldwin hoped that the space of the theater—shared between characters, the actors who portray them, and the audience members who listen and look on—could create a sense of “ritual” and “spiritual communion” that led to social change.

Similarly, Henry’s work critiques the normative rhetorics of U.S. settler-colonial law, satirizing the emotional appeals that attorneys use to win over judges and juries, and revealing what

happens when legal “rules” and “rationality” are taken to such an extreme that they allow the bones and spirits of deceased Native Americans to be exhumed and repossessed by scientists and curators, who treat them as “objects” to adorn the walls of natural history museums. In contrast, the rhetorics of the indigenous witnesses on the stand ground themselves in communal rituals and appeal to the spirits of their audiences. Not only, then, can literature expose the flaws in much contemporary legal rhetoric; it also can provide a model of a more spiritual, ethical, and character-driven rhetoric that lawyers and witnesses (as James Boyd White has suggested) might use in actual courtrooms.

Chapter 3, “*Ethos as Com-position*: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Locational Rhetoric of *Nos/otras*,” probes the deep connections between “attitude” and “location” that we discussed above, that contemporary rhetorical theorists of space (such as Nedra Reynolds) have pointed out, and that we see in word pairs such as *habit/habitat*, *civil/civic*, and *propriety/property*. Anzaldúa’s 1987 book *Borderlands*, along with a number of other published and unpublished writings of hers, conceives of *ethos* as a complex queer mode of “dwelling” that occurs through shifting artistic language, rather than in a stable geographic space. Rather than seeking to connect with readers didactically, either through rational argumentative claims or through appeals to the emotions, *Borderlands* emphasizes “location” itself—dwelling on and in various locations, formally expressing them on the page through creative indentation, whitespace, and enjambment. As these vast locations are expressed and imagined, the intimate sharing of a location between the speaker and the reader decreases the “distance” between them.

Straddling national borders and moving constantly from place to place, Anzaldúa’s narrators challenge the emphasis that feminist theories of “standpoint” and “postpositivist realism” put on “where one is speaking from,” by inviting readers to “be at home with them” not in a shared physical territory but, instead, on a shared book-page and in shared conversation. Anzaldúa’s term for this *ethos*-based *communication of location* is “com-position.” Ultimately, I argue that what creates, revivifies, and sustains community in *Borderlands* are the shared identifications that emerge in “com-position,” rather than (as some readers of Anzaldúa might expect) affinities based on a shared racial, gender, and/or sexual identity.

Finally, Chapter 4, “*Ethos as Ethics*: How *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* Asks Us Who We Are and Who We Should Be,” takes Sherman Alexie’s 2007 National Book Award–winning young adult novel as a case study for exploring the *ethics* of social communication, of literary narration, and of literary criticism. *The Absolutely True Diary*’s form and narration directly concern, and even emphasize, ethical questions: about the relationship between speech and disability, about adults’ power over young people, about toxic masculinities and internalized homophobias, about addictions, and about the differences in norms and expectations across locations. While the book is Alexie’s novel, it is also the “diary” of a fourteen- and fifteen-year-old young indigenous narrator named Junior, who was born with hydrocephalus. He stutters and lisps when he speaks aloud, leading to his bullying on and off the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington. Nevertheless, Junior’s verbal interactions with others in person and especially his diary-writing root themselves in ethical questions and ethical appeals, persuading his listeners and readers to move away from the fear of disability, of Native Americans, of queer discourse, and of youth all too common in his local and national environments.

Junior’s rhetorical strategies to eradicate these fears ultimately extend beyond the fictional world of the book itself, as the text anticipates (and seeks to undo) the “real-life” phobias behind the widespread banning of *The Absolutely True Diary* and other books like it in U.S. middle and high school classrooms. Furthermore, Alexie himself has been increasingly criticized since February 2018, when several other writers began publicly accusing him of sexual misconduct. As a result, a number of people who once disapproved of the censorship that *Diary* experienced—because of its “vulgarity,” “anti-Christian content,” and depictions of racism—later decided that the “unethical”

behavior of the author was a valid reason to avoid reading the book. From all of these angles, some competing with one another, *Diary* (alongside recent contributions to ethical literary criticism, such as that of Wayne Booth) consistently asks us to reflect on what our ethics are and should be. In other words, our *ethos*—“the way we express ourselves” and the values by which we hope to live—is at once something that the book depicts and exhibits, something that we can analyze about our society, and something that we are *doing* when we analyze the expressions of the book and of our society.

It is my hope that, by bringing *ethos* to bear on postwar U.S. minority literatures, *Ethos at the Periphery* will mend some of the longstanding divisions between “literature” and “composition”—and between literary theory and rhetorical theory—as I consider them mutually constituting, rather than disparate, fields and practices. In revisiting and reformulating Aristotelian *ethos*, all the authors and narrators that I examine in this dissertation escape the constraining *logic/affect* or *logos/pathos* binary and enable us to reconceive of “argument,” “protest,” and “polemical writing” as modes of expression that can emphasize artistic and literary qualities like symbol, collage, and world-building, as opposed to a necessarily “unartful” progression of rational or sentimental claims. Finally, I hope it will become clear how the *ethos*-based appeals of minority speakers like these (not only in literature—but in law, politics, and many other realms as well) register an effective counter-response to the allure of “alternative facts” and similar rhetorical strategies that seek to reify disfranchisement and violence around the globe.

Acknowledgments

This project simply would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of so many scholars and friends. The first round of thanks goes to my dissertation committee, all three of whom read so many drafts, wrote so many letters, and asked so many of the right questions. My adviser, Scott Saul, believed in this project from the start, always pointing out the historical connections in my work better than I ever could—and showing me the unending value of “the archive” for researchers of contemporary American literature and culture. Speaking of “culture,” Bryan Wagner has always understood, and continues to teach me, how “low” culture and “high” theory are often, in fact, one and the same. For that, I am immensely thankful. Mel Y. Chen sees the incredible power of language, its bizarre social contours, and its effects on differently positioned subjects better than anyone else I know. This dissertation is stronger as a result.

Countless others have made Berkeley a wonderful place for both research and teaching—always sharpening my thinking, clarifying the stakes of this dissertation, and embodying intellectual community at its best. I could not possibly name them all, but special thanks go to Paola Bacchetta, Ariel Baker-Gibbs, Brandon Callender, Cheng Chai Chiang, Jeehyun Choi, Becky Clark, Johaina Crisostomo, Aristides Dimitriou, Kathleen Donegan, Amanda Goldstein, Marcial González, Sarah Jessica Johnson, Mehak Khan, David Landreth, Steven Lee, David Marno, Ryan McWilliams, Ismail Muhammad, Gerard Ramm, Jared Robinson, Jesse Cordes Selbin, Katherine Snyder, Cara Stanley, Amanda Su, Charis Thompson, Jason Treviño, Atti Viragh, and Hertha Sweet Wong.

Completing a doctorate can become an exceedingly lonely endeavor; the semi-formal intellectual communities that have made my experience so much less lonely and so much more vibrant deserve a major shout-out here. To my MMUF, SILCS, Koshland, Berkeley Connect, Post45, and C3 crews: you filled me with life.

I thank all my students, for sharing the gift of intellectual exploration with me over the years. And I thank the scholars who went out of their way to support me during my time as an undergraduate (and beyond): Gary Y. Okihiro, Rebecca Wanzo, Kathy Eden, Brent Hayes Edwards, Hazel May, Elizabeth Scharffenberger, Shawn Anthony Christian, and Paula Krebs.

I also want to thank the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, and The Phi Beta Kappa Society for fellowships and grants that enabled me to complete this dissertation, as well as to travel to several archival sites during the research process. The archivists at the Library of Congress, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University, and the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin all provided invaluable research support during my visits.

Several friends opened up their homes to me, in multiple countries, during trips to archives and conferences. Nathaniel Nicholas, Carolina Martes, Dionysios Anninos, and Chester Dols deserve a round of applause louder than I can give. Major thanks, too, must go to Zac Connelly, Beatrice Di Francesco, Richmond Glasgow, Greg Koski, Zach Levine, Joe Marano, Alexandra O’Hagan, and Elaine, Roy, and Elmer Shi.

Friends not named above who put up with my wacky ideas and who helped to keep me going include Aku Ammah-Tagoe, Gerd Brandstetter, Colin Christensen, Kyle DeLand, Andrew Godinich, Cameron Howard, Eric Lombardi, Ashley Reichardt, Ben Truong, and Rachel Wampler.

My parents, Rosemary Zyne and Julio Valella, have done more than I can say—more than *anyone* can say—to keep me on the right path.

Finally, to the Greater Lil Red Crew, who have showered me with support during the toughest of times and who have made this project and its author all the better: Rishita Apsani, Koehler Briceño, Lisa and John Oliver Chen, Zac Connelly, Beatrice Di Francesco, Maya Fegan,

Tyler Gainey, Jessie Yijun Han, Greg Koski, Sasha Makovik, Ezra Mauer, Omid Mortazavi, Rohan Ramakrishna, Kevin Tsukii, Silas Wilkinson, James Wood, and Brian and Surui Zhang. This dissertation is for you.

Chapter 1
Ethos as Consubstantiality:
Ralph Ellison and Kenneth Burke's Black-and-White "Accord of Sensibilities"

Introduction

On June 4, 1939, at the Third American Writers' Congress in New York, Kenneth Burke presented a paper—"The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'"—arguing that Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a full English version of which was published for the first time that year, deserved a serious rhetorical analysis by all those intellectuals who sought to prevent the rise of Nazism, fascism, and other overtly racist political movements across the globe. Most members of the audience (many of whom were Jewish) found Burke's argument difficult to stomach. At least one listener, though, found the essay extremely compelling. Ralph Ellison, then a 26-year-old novice writer, thought Burke's mixture of Marxist materialist and Freudian psychoanalytic theories opened up an entire new realm of linguistic and social analysis—one that could elucidate the many particular "attitudes" that together constitute American culture. Ellison was so impressed that he made it a point, at the end of the lecture, to jostle his way through the crowd to shake Burke's hand (Rampersad 96; Jackson 181–82).

The relationship between Burke and Ellison, which began at this moment, has intrigued scholars of American literature and intellectual history for quite some time, yet the vast majority of these scholars have focused on Ellison's interest in Burke's concept of "symbolic action," in Burke's books *Counter-Statement* and *Philosophy of Literary Form*, and in the ability of Burke's Freud-Marxist framework to provide potential resolutions to "the stubborn paradoxes of African American culture" (J. Wright 52; Jackson 181–82, 354). Accordingly, what would seem to be the primary value, for Ellison, of Burke's 1939 lecture on Hitler is its dissection of "the Führer's anti-Semitic ravings in plain language"—its critical exposure of the lies and manipulations that Hitler created to scapegoat a racial-religious minority group rather than dealing honestly with Germany's economic woes. The line from Burke's lecture that critics interested in Ellison quote most often is: "Our job, then, our anti-Hitler Battle, is to find all available ways of making the Hitlerite distortions of religion apparent, in order that politicians of his kind in America be unable to perform a similar swindle" ("Battle" 219). How might other Americans extend Burke's rhetorical analysis to prevent ideologues here at home from scapegoating, say, African Americans—at great cost to the social health of the democracy?

As Lawrence Jackson has argued, the revelation that Hitler (in Burke's words) promoted "unification by a fictitious devil-function, gradually made convincing by the sloganizing repetitiousness of standard advertising techniques," could allow black intellectuals in the United States to critique in a similar fashion the racist nationalisms emerging around them: "Ellison, achingly familiar with Scottsboro and the crucified Claude Neale, as well as the customarily unflattering depictions of blacks in cinema and in advertising, saw need for a Burkean analysis on his home turf" ("Battle" 218–19; Jackson 181–82). Indeed, as Ellison later noted, Burke's theoretical framework "provided a *Gestalt* through which I could apply intellectual insights back into my own materials and into my own life," and a number of Ellison's writings—fictional and nonfictional—evoke a Burkean critical position (Crabbe 45).

I will argue here, however, that this "*Gestalt*" that Ellison saw in Burke's work was important not only as a critical or analytical tool but also as a generative and practical device. Gestalt theory, as psychologist Kurt Koffka put it, insists that "the whole is something else than the sum of the parts" (171). In this vein, Burke explained that the "desire for unity" among anxious Germans could not be satisfied by "a discussion of class conflict, on the basis of conflicting interests," since such a discussion would maintain stratification rather than generating a powerful union. However, in identifying Jews as the singular cause of all the problems around the globe, "Hitler provided a 'world

view' for people who had previously seen the world but piecemeal," giving them a minority target to combat in the service of calcifying their own national identity ("Battle" 205, 218). While it is certainly true that an exposé of Hitler's race- and religion-based rhetorical distortions in Europe could help Ellison and others expose the race- and religion-based rhetorical distortions performed by American leaders, Ellison's deepest interest in such rhetorical moves was not about critiquing or explaining them but about *using* similar devices—to a vastly different political end. For him, illustrating the fallacies of racist discourse in the U.S. was not enough; *practicing* an antiracist discourse, especially through literature, was the real goal.

As the Second World War came to a close in 1945, Ellison remained unsatisfied by the defeat of the Axis Powers, since African Americans still struggled to communicate with, and be heard by, the majority of their countrymen. White Americans, in particular, did not yet feel as though black Americans shared the same cultural and ethical principles. On November 23, Ellison typed out a lengthy letter to Burke, in which he wrote:

But now let me ask you a question: How will a Negro writer who writes out of his full awareness of the complexity of western personality, and who presents the violence of American culture in psychological terms rather than physical ones—how will such a writer be able to break through the stereotype-armored minds of white Americans so that they can receive his message? As I see it, the two racial groups in this country lack the accord of sensibilities of which Malraux writes and whites are unable to see Negroes as the reincarnation of any of the values by which they live. This is a crucial problem with me just now and I would like to have your opinion.¹

The "crucial problem" that preoccupies Ellison is a *rhetorical* one. For him, all writing, including fiction, promotes a "message" from the writer to the reader.² Because white readers often assumed from the start that African Americans truly embodied the various stereotypes circulating throughout the Jim Crow U.S., black writers' work was legible to these readers only if it adhered to—or could be (mis)interpreted as adhering to—such stereotypes. For Ellison, the major hindrance to black writers was the apparent discord of "sensibilities" between white and black Americans; the two groups seemed to have different "values by which they live." In rhetorical terms, it was a problem of *ethos*.

We will remember that, according to Aristotle, *ethos* is the persuasive "character" that emerges when a "speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence," and he insists that its persuasiveness "should result *from the speech*, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person" (*On Rhetoric* 1.2.4, my emphasis). At the start of a rhetorical expression, the speaker's or writer's *personal history* is considered irrelevant—yet the expresser's *words themselves*, over the course of the expression, become incredibly important as illustrations of the character, attitude, and values that the expresser, as a person, generally exhibits. When it comes to *ethos*, the audience ultimately makes a judgment about the expresser and his expression based on how harmonious they reveal his character and values to be with the audience's own. Listeners and readers hope to *identify*, in some way, with the person addressing them. For this reason, though, the "lack" of "accord of sensibilities" between different racial (or other social) groups—if members of one group are "unable to see" the other as embodying the same qualities—remains a significant communicative problem. It is precisely the one that Ellison hoped Burke could help him solve.

¹ This letter is catalogued in the Library of Congress's Ralph Ellison Papers (Box I, Container 38, Folder 8). Throughout this chapter, I cite it as "Letter to Burke."

² Ellison spoke of "the rhetoric of fiction" in many conversations and essays. I discuss several such instances on pages 23–24.

Given Burke's concern with the global implications of Hitler's symbolic rhetoric, and Ellison's interest in the question of how "a Negro writer" might communicate to a national audience through words on a page, we can better understand these two men's political-literary project when we approach it from a rhetorical perspective.

Burke and Ellison worked at the same time—at some points together, at others separately—to identify a form of rhetorical *ethos* that would allow members of differently positioned groups (on political, religious, racial, or other grounds) to communicate effectively across their social divides. The culminations of this work were Burke's scholarly book *A Rhetoric of Motives*, published in 1950, and Ellison's celebrated novel *Invisible Man*, published in 1952. The former theorized rhetorical *ethos* for the second half of the twentieth century as the demonstration of "consubstantiality" between communicator and audience, while the latter put this theory into practice—testing, tweaking, and regenerating it, on both the inner level of the plot and the outer level of the narration. As literary scholars continue imploring us to consider the "uses of literature" and the "political consequences of texts," we will benefit from examining the rhetorical methods by which *Invisible Man* engages its readers (Felski, *Uses*; Bronstein 28). Furthermore, if the fascist and scapegoating rhetoric that Hitler deployed in the 1930s and 1940s has been revitalized in our current political climate—in which large audiences are swayed by "alternative facts," revealing the failure of *logos* as an effectual mode of persuasion—it behooves us to look closely at the *ethos*-based Burkean critique of such rhetoric, as well as at the *ethos*-based Ellisonian revisions of it.

Burkean *Ethos*

In his November 1945 letter, Ellison told Burke that his forthcoming novel, *Invisible Man*, would be his best way of thanking Burke for providing him with a robust and incisive theoretical framework through which to understand the contemporary world and its rhetorical challenges. "So, if in the little things I write from time to time you observe anything of value," Ellison explained,

then to that extent am I able to express concretely my appreciation for what you have done. That is a debt I shall never stop paying and it begins back in the thirties, when you read the rhetoric of 'Hitler's Battle' before the League of American Writers, at the New School (I believe you were the only speaker out of the whole group who was concerned with writing and politics, rather than writing as an excuse—and that in a superficial manner. It took a war to reveal the illusion in which the boys were caught, but you must have known it all the time. [...]) Anyway, I am writing a novel now and perhaps if it is worthwhile it will be my most effective means of saying thanks. Anything else seems to me inadequate and unimaginative. (Letter to Burke, emphases original)

What too many critics of Ellison miss is the enormous extent to which rhetoric, as it operates in political and social life, intrigued him as a subject of study and then practice. Especially after World War II, which he saw as a "revelation" of Hitler's deeply influential rhetorical artistry, Ellison continued Burke's project of analyzing the sociopolitical "action" of verbal communication. Importantly, both Burke and Ellison made it a point to dissect *writing* as a form of political rhetoric and rhetorical politics at their present time. For Burke, the written work of *Mein Kampf* was just as important an exhibit for rhetorical analysis as were any of Hitler's spirited deliveries on the stump. For Ellison, the fact that symbolic fictions pervaded so many political expressions at the same time as the American novel enjoyed great popularity impelled him to write an influential novel of his own.

In order to consider the novel form of rhetorical expression, Ellison maintained the classical notion that rhetoric is a process of communication (and thus the novel is a message, or a series of messages, communicated between the narrator and reader) while slightly downplaying the importance of “persuasion”—emphasizing “identification” instead. The move in rhetorical theory toward *identification* gained prominence in the West in the second half of the twentieth century, as innovations in science, technology, and media created a vast new network of rhetorical transmission and reception. Burke himself is widely credited with popularizing this theoretical shift, known as the “New Rhetoric,” with his publication of *A Rhetoric of Motives*—a book he wrote while frequently corresponding and socializing with Ellison. In the book’s introduction, Burke calls *identification* his “key term,” one that helps to parse the “intermediate area of expression that is not wholly deliberate, yet not wholly unconscious” (xiii). He goes on to say, in his signature first-person-plural voice:

Traditionally, the key term for rhetoric is not “identification,” but “persuasion.” [...] Our treatment, in terms of identification, is decidedly not meant as a substitute for the sound traditional approach. Rather, as we try to show, it is but an accessory to the standard lore. And our book aims to make itself at home in both emphases. Particularly when we come upon such aspects of persuasion as are found in “mystification,” courtship, and the “magic” of class relationships, the reader will see why the classical notion of clear persuasive intent is not an accurate fit, for describing the ways in which the members of a group promote social cohesion by acting rhetorically upon themselves and one another. (Burke, *Motives* xiv)

The shift in emphasis from persuasion to identification effectively raises *ethos* even further above *logos* and *pathos* in the rhetorical scaffold, since *ethos*—even in the traditional Aristotelian conception—is the proof most directly related to the identities of the speaker and his audience. Burke makes it clear that his project is not to undermine the “sound” framework of classical (especially Aristotelian) rhetoric but, rather, to expand upon it for the current age. Political and cultural debates still take place in public, and the traditional methods of persuasion remain helpful in such circumstances. Nonetheless, Burke’s concern with “social cohesion” led him to search for a theoretical framework to explain how rhetoric might be used effectively in cases where there is no clear *argument* but a more general lack of accord between (members of) two social groups.

Importantly, Burke notes that some form of division is in fact a prerequisite for rhetoric. If we all agreed already, “persuasion”—or the effort to create “identification”—would be unnecessary:

The *Rhetoric* [*of Motives*] deals with the possibilities of classification in its *partisan* aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another. Why “at odds,” you may ask, when the titular term is “identification”? Because, to begin with “identification” is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of *division*. [...] Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need of the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. (*Motives* 22, italics original)

Social divides—political religious, racial, and so on—are thus the most important zones for rhetoric in the context of a pluralistic nation like the post–World War II U.S.³ In writing and literature, an

³ *Nation* does not need to be the all-encompassing framework for us generally—but it certainly is for Ellison, and it largely is for Burke as well (given his discussion of Hitlerite rhetoric and the nation of Germany specifically).

especially successful rhetorical production would enable a diverse national reading public to identify with a writer or narrator who is “in the minority” when it comes to one or more key social identities. Crafting social cohesion, despite the intense differences in lived experience among the nation’s many constituent groups, strengthens the democracy and minimizes the likelihood of warfare.

Burke’s term for the rhetorical appeal of identification is “consubstantiality”—nearly an English translation of “*e pluribus unum*.” As he explains it, “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (*Motives* 20). This model is one of unity without uniformity—a theme that appears over and over again in Ellison’s writings. In this postwar U.S. context, pluralism functions at the level of the individual, as well as at the level of the group. Burke elaborates: “Here are ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, and individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another” (*Motives* 21).⁴ If, for Ellison, the main challenge for black writers in addressing a national audience is to overcome ingrained stereotypes that prevent many white readers from “seeing themselves in” the consciousnesses and actions of their black compatriots, an effective use of a rhetoric of consubstantiality might prove the best remedy.

It is also clear that Burke’s conception of consubstantiality, especially as it concerns persuasion, derives from Aristotle’s formulations of *ethos*. Burke notes that persuasion

involves communication by the signs of consubstantiality, the appeal of *identification*. Even *extrinsic* consideration can thus be derived in an orderly manner from persuasion as generating principle: for an act of persuasion is affected by the character of the scene in which it takes place and of the agents to whom it is addressed. The same rhetorical act could vary in its effectiveness, according to shifts in the situation or in the attitude of audiences. (*Motives* 62, italics original)

If we were to choose verbs to describe the respective roles of the speaker and of the audience in a rhetorical scenario, we would probably select words along the lines of “to explain” and “to think” for *logos* and “to impassion” and “to feel” for *pathos*.⁵ What, then, are the verbs that correlate with *ethos*, the third of Aristotle’s rhetorical proofs? Following Burke, I propose that, for both the speaker and the audience, one of the most fitting verbs is “to identify” (in the sense of “to characterize,” for the former; in the sense of “to associate [with],” for the latter).⁶ Because *ethos* demands a mutuality of character between speaker and audience, it makes sense for the verbs that describe each party’s *ethos*-based act (whether an appeal or a receipt) to be the same. The former’s *identification* of soon becomes

⁴ This formulation (like the “apart from”/“unity” dyad in the Burke quotation on page 8) recalls the “a part” and “That’s American” lines from Langston Hughes’s poem “Theme for English B.” For more detail, see note 23.

⁵ “Thinking” and “feeling,” of course, constitute a longstanding Western philosophical binary (employed even by Aristotle himself, in the *Politics*, as a way of understanding what distinguishes “man” from “animal” or “natural ruler” from “natural slave”) that so many intellectuals have worked over the centuries to debunk. Recent examples of this critique include Giorgio Agamben’s *The Use of Bodies* (2016), which attends closely to Aristotle’s conception in the *Politics* of the “natural slave,” who seems at once both human and inhuman; Mel Y. Chen’s *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (2012), which begins with a discussion of Aristotle’s *De Anima* before illustrating how contemporary language habitually distinguishes the “animate” from the “inanimate,” despite the “animacy” present in matter (neither “human” nor “animal”) that is considered insensate or immobile; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), which reminds us of the erotics, the textures, and the desires of what we understand as “thought.”

⁶ I should note here that the verbs *explain*/*think*, *impassion*/*feel*, and *identify*/*identify* (like the concepts of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* themselves) are not intended to be mutually exclusive; rather, they overlap—but remain distinct in their *emphases*.

the latter's *identification with*. Furthermore, Burke's use of the words "character" and "attitude" in his discussion of rhetorical scenes, agents, and audiences makes it clear that Aristotelian *ethos* is the classical basis for his mid-twentieth-century theory of identification and consubstantiality.

Burke's famous earlier claim in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941) that poetry is a kind of "symbolic action"—"*the dancing of an attitude*"—exemplifies a practice of literary interpretation that places rhetorical *ethos* at the center (8–9). It also helps us to see the connections between the classical conception of *ethos* as "attitude" and the more modern conception of *ethos* as a discourse of "symbols" and symbolism (Geertz). Published just two years after *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Ellison's *Invisible Man* features a narrator who consistently seeks, through symbolic oratory, to identify himself favorably with the wide variety of audiences he encounters in the novel's plot. Furthermore, his famous final line—"Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?"—signifies in his address to his readers a patent rhetorical motive, which scores of critics have probed.⁷

Richard Wright: A Case Study for Burke and Ellison's Rhetorical Literary Criticism

As Bryan Crable notes, Burke and Ellison had the closest intellectual and social relationship when Burke was writing *A Rhetoric of Motives*—and, I would add, when Ellison was writing *Invisible Man*. Crable points out that the *Rhetoric* is "the only one of Burke's books to cite Ellison," in large part because Ellison's 1945 essay "Richard Wright's Blues" (which called Wright's just-released memoir *Black Boy* "a nonwhite intellectual's statement of his relationship to western culture" that illuminates a "conflicting pattern of identification and rejection" à la Dostoyevsky, Joyce, and Nehru) had a major influence on Burke "only one month into serious work on his now-canonical text" ("Blues" 263–64; Crable 47–48). Ellison examined Wright's oeuvre through an intensely rhetorical lens, noting the problems of "identification" and "communication" in African-American literature while Burke was just beginning his work on *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Burke's earlier writings on literary form and language as symbolic action led Ellison to develop new approaches to literature—especially American, and even more especially African-American, literature—that in turn led Burke to rethink rhetoric in ways that addressed communication across social divides.

It is now well known that Burke wrote Ellison a letter on October 24, 1945, in which he suggested that literary criticism should work toward an ethics that is "'universal' rather than 'racial'"—and that Ellison therefore was "wrong to back" Wright's seemingly *pathos*-ridden and racial/typological "esthetic so completely." What very few people know, however, is that only eight days later, Ellison delivered a spirited lecture to the entire community of Bennington College (where Burke worked for many years)—on the subject of "American Negro Writing, a Problem of Identity." In this lecture, now catalogued in the Ralph Ellison Papers at the Library of Congress, Ellison argued that the "problem of communication" between black writers and (especially white) American readers was an incredible obstacle whose dismantlement would enable a "revitalization" of American literature and "a transformation of American culture" ("American Negro Writing"). While he discussed Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, and several Harlem Renaissance writers, his major focus was Wright's oeuvre, from *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) to *Native Son* (1940) to *Black Boy* (1945).

At this point, Ellison already had begun drafting *Invisible Man*, and he carefully studied U.S. readers' responses to recent works by Wright and other African Americans in an effort to determine which literary styles and themes could best illuminate the social values shared by black and white countrymen alike. In other words, Ellison was searching for a kind of rhetorical and literary *ethos* that black writers and narrators could mobilize, in harmony with a wide American readership. He began

⁷ See, for example, Callahan, Hanlon, and Stepto.

his lecture by noting that the “controversial nature of recent writings by the younger American Negroes implies a problem of communication. We find both Negro and white readers disagreeing with the picture of reality presented by these writers and there has been much questioning—both of the writers’ attitude and of their integrity” (Ellison, “American Negro Writing”). Controversy itself might not be a problem, but the fact that American readers of diverse backgrounds remain unconvinced by “the picture of reality” that authors like Wright depict, as well as by the “attitude” or “integrity” of the authors themselves, reveals an unsuccessful mobilization of *ethos*—of *Gestalt* or “worldview” and also of personal character. This is not to say that the burden lies solely on the black writer to improve his or her articulations; it is merely to take note of an existing *ethos* divide between black writers and American readers and, ultimately, to ask how one might go about closing the gap.

Providing a fuller account of the rhetorical-literary challenge that he identified in his letter to Burke, Ellison suggested that African-American writers address their work not to a particular kind of reader but to the nation as a whole, toeing the line between a promotion of the *ideal values* of U.S. society and a criticism of the material *realities* of American life (in which these ideals are far from being achieved). “All communication implies a body of assumptions held in common by those in communication,” Ellison argued, “and we identify that complex of assumptions in the larger sense as a culture. Let us, for our purposes, use the notion of André Malraux’s terms ‘AN [*sic*] accord of sensibilities’ and in the ethical sense the ‘incarnation of a system of values’” (“American Negro Writing”). Here, Ellison presents the etymological and pragmatic connections between the *communicative*, the *common*, and the *communal*, eventually advocating a national project that is neither assimilationist nor separatist; it is participatory. His adjective “ethical” further demonstrates the bonds between ethics and *ethos*—between an agreed-upon social system and a nexus of diverse *characters*, or performances of communicative goodwill, enacted by this social system’s constituents. There is no question, of course, that the historical and formal constructions of racism in the U.S.—despite the promises of equality, liberty, and justice for all “in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights”—have made it essentially impossible for African Americans to participate as equal members of such a system. Still, Ellison identified a muddled, veiled, or unrealized agreement among Americans of all races, and so the task of “the Negro writer” was to clarify, reveal, and realize this agreement through language (“American Negro Writing”).

In his exegesis of Malraux’s term “accord of sensibilities,” Ellison noted the importance of *ethos* to a pluralistic U.S. and effectively theorized the complex nature of rhetorical consubstantiality five years before Burke published his famous book on the subject. Of Malraux’s term, Ellison wrote,

let that refer to the “National character of Americans,” as formed through the interaction of personalities guided by certain values with the American environment. So here we have a Nation of some 130 million people living under the same general conditions, paying homage to the same flag, speaking the same language. [...] But now our problem begins, for when you look closely at the 130 millions of Americans you see that over 13 million are black and when you look even closer you will note that that blackness has a divisive effect far ou[t] of porportion [*sic*] to the 13 million in whose pigmentation it is embodied. It d[i]vides Americans as to sensibility and has effected a cleavage within the American system of values. And we find that [...] between the split parts there is generated a hot area of intense conflict to be seen in our system of values as it effects [*sic*] politics, our institutions, our personalities, and our art. (Letter to Burke, emphasis original)

Ethos constitutes both the “national character of Americans” and the value-driven individual “personalities” that inform it. The issue of a distinctly American language, common to all members

of the nation, captivated Ellison throughout his lifetime.⁸ For this reason, writing and literature were crucial venues in which black Americans should articulate their concerns to a mass audience.

The divide of “sensitivity,” which typically translated into a divide of “art,” could be bridged through a sort of reverse-engineering: an accord of artistic *style* or symbolism, without resorting to a flattening of real material disparities, might enhance the accord of cultural and ethical sensibilities among differently racialized Americans. In his Bennington lecture, Ellison argued that, because

sensitivity rests upon social reality far more than upon the ideal, that accord of sensibilities of which Malraux speaks is for the most part non-existent; and the system of values has never been allowed to reincarnate [...] in the flesh of black men. Hence when we come to the Negro writer we find him called upon to communicate across a vast psychological distance with words the meanings of which he can never be quite sure. (“American Negro Writing”)

If social conventions preclude rhetorical communion between members of differently racialized groups, how exactly can black writers turn the real into the “ideal” and reach a wide American audience? That Ellison described the distance between black authors and mainstream readers as “psychological” is an important clue into how these challenges might be answered. It reveals a Burkean conception of literary and rhetorical forms (à la “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle’”) that enabled Ellison to analyze the works of the period’s most influential U.S. black writer—Richard Wright—and, in turn, to pave a way forward for African-American (and all American) literature.

Just as Burke showed the necessity of a framework that was both economic (Marxist) and psychological (Freudian/*Gestalt*) for our understanding of Hitler’s rhetoric and of nationalism more generally, Ellison argued that Wright’s engagement with Marxism and construction of highly psychological narratives created a sea change in African-American literature. Nonetheless, Wright’s accomplishments constituted only the nascent stage of literary creation that could bridge the psychological and ethical divide. Ellison claimed that Wright’s participation in Chicago’s John Reed Club—which provided him with a *Gestalt*, a “world view of Marxism”—“was the most important thing to happen to Negro writing since the days of Douglass.” It marked the “emergence of the American Negro as a Western individual” (“American Negro Writing”). While this latter claim might appear hyperbolic and assimilatory—dismissive of earlier achievements in African-American literature and suggestive of an individualism that seems at odds with the naturalist and typological devices of *Native Son*—Ellison made it very clear that the project he envisioned (and that Wright had begun) was necessary at the mid-twentieth century if Americans sought to overcome Jim Crow segregation and move toward a realization of the founding principles of equality.⁹ He was immensely concerned with praxis and significant political change, and (as he put it to Burke in his letter) he believed in the power of writing *as politics* rather than as something purely aesthetic or even *informed by*, but not *generative of*, political action.¹⁰

Despite a series of critiques that now position *Invisible Man* (and especially Ellison’s ensuing nonfiction) as rather centrist—adhering to a Cold War liberal consensus that shunned Communism,

⁸ See pages 23–24 for more of Ellison’s writings on this topic. Some critics take issue with scholarly readings of *Invisible Man* that are informed by Ellison’s late nonfiction on “the American vernacular,” since such readings might be “backdating” 1970s (essayist) Ellison onto early 1950s (novelist) Ellison; in my view, the 1945 letter from Ellison to Burke illustrates both the earliness and the consistency of this Ellisonian intellectual position on language and nation.

⁹ Indeed, Ellison did say elsewhere in his Bennington lecture that “Negro writing in the 20’s had been provincial and racial” and that “When you examine its texture you note that it exhibits a kind of primitivism. It sings of an exotic Africa—which never existed in this world—and sets out to prove that ‘Negroes are as good as white folks.’”

¹⁰ In *Color and Culture*, Ross Posnock looks closely at these concerns and, in doing so, considers Ellison as a “pragmatist.”

Third Worldism, or even collective action in favor of a masculinist and individualistic American nationalism—Ellison made it quite apparent that he agreed with a great deal of Wright’s Leftist commitments and sought to find a way for such commitments to be *communicated effectively* to, or even absorbed by, a wide array of American readers.¹¹ In fact, he lambasted Harlem Renaissance writers for producing “a literature of contentment” that was well received by American readers precisely because it offered no “real challenge to the status quo” (Ellison, “American Negro Writing”). What Ellison desired, then, was a literature that moved the needle: work that used the techniques of rhetorical identification and persuasion to create lasting change.

Ellison’s first critique of Wright’s work, along these lines, dealt with the 1938 short story collection *Uncle Tom’s Children*. He noted that the intention of the stories “was to shake the complacency of the American public before the facts of Negro life and to arouse it to action.” In rhetorical and practical terms, “the book was a failure,” because Wright admitted that it enabled “even ba[n]kers’ daughters” to “discover the catharsis of tears,” and so it “had neither conveyed his vision nor accomplished his social and ethical purpose” (Ellison, “American Negro Writing”).¹² *Uncle Tom’s Children* connected with wealthy white readers, who somehow were moved by a sentimentality that the stories generated—but moved only in the sense of finding the narratives poignant and aesthetically pleasing, not in the sense of being mobilized politically. In a way, this test case suggests the limitations of rhetorical *pathos* when unaccompanied by effective appeals to *ethos*: even a successful stirring of readers’ emotions will fail to incite political action if the text does not persuade them of an ethical or social problem in need of fixing (or if the writer/narrator who recognizes and seeks to fix such a problem never achieves consubstantiality with the readers). Ellison put it this way:

Now if we accept Kenneth Burke’s definition of form, as representing the psychology of the reader, then we see that even down into the aspects of structure Wright has misjudged the psychology of his audience. Of course that was not generally so because the ideological content of his book was well accepted by those Americans who tended to be Left in their thinking. I would say that the problem of communication now posed by the writer is twofold—How could he convey his ideological convictions and at the same time project in a successful way his picture of reality and Negro personality? Now these stories were admittedly powerful and very skillfully done. Which leads us to look for their failure—not so much in their technique but in the culture into which they were projected. (“American Negro Writing”)

¹¹ Arguments that Ellison moved from Leftism to centrism just after World War II include Barbara Foley’s *Wrestling with the Left* and Lawrence Jackson’s claim (in *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius*) that, in 1947, “[t]he collapse of the Left indicated for Ellison an inevitable rapprochement with the *Partisan Review* crowd, in part because of the growing prominence of the New Critical approach to literature, which continued to push for a separation between art and politics, a set of assumptions that was growing in its appeal to editors like [Philip] Rahv and William Phillips. As he increasingly embraced the Aristotelian logic espoused by Kenneth Burke, and further left behind his Communist associations, Ellison, too, accommodated the separation. His ideas about politics were also mellowing” (355). For insightful discussions of *Invisible Man*’s restrictive (perhaps even compulsory) masculinity, see Kim, Morrison, and Tate.

¹² The manuscript of the lecture in the Ralph Ellison Papers at the Library of Congress says “bakers,” but it is clear that Ellison meant to say “bankers,” not only because bankers would be expected to be much wealthier than bakers but also because the Richard Wright Papers (Box 6, Folder 128) at Yale University’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library include a typewritten manuscript of Wright’s—undated, but probably written in 1940—in which he laments that “the bulk of the left and social novels” published in the 1930s “are now accepted; even adolescent daughters of bankers read them when they are published and shed a few melancholy tears.”

The bit about Leftism is crucial, as it implies that Ellison's commitments were Leftist but that his vision of a political praxis that moves the needle is one that finds a way to appeal to non-Leftists—or, rather, to those who are not predisposed to think similarly about social issues.¹³ In terms of emotional appeal, Wright's stories were “admittedly powerful”; in terms of their literary “technique,” they were “very skillfully done.” Where the stories fell short was in their understanding of the “psychology” and cultural character of the audience—and in their ability to project an authorial or narrative worldview (a “picture of reality”) that readers could recognize. In sum, *Uncle Tom's Children* illuminates the challenge for black writers of putting forth their “ideological convictions” in a way that is neither illegible nor openly didactic; instead, they must paint a “picture of reality” whose components, forms, and styles jibe in some way with the lived experience of readers who currently have different ideological convictions or interpretations of the world around them.

With *Native Son*, Ellison argued, Wright took “psychological structure” and the “realities of industrial capitalism” much more seriously, enabling him to chart “the failure of the white man's democratic consciousness” by creating a protagonist in Bigger Thomas who was so completely “malignant” that the novel would disable “all sentimental approaches to Negro personality” by American readers. Still, many readers failed to see the humanity within this “malignant” type—who might come off as a caricature or a monster, rather than as a real person (Ellison, “American Negro Writing”). In other words, Wright's correction in *Native Son* for too much *pathos* in *Uncle Tom's Children* served to expose a “national character” that has led to the creation (either real or imagined) of a type like Bigger, yet this exposition came at the high cost of presenting a black protagonist with no redeeming personal qualities—no *personal* “character” or *ethos* with which readers could identify. A move toward a protagonist or narrator who is recognizable to a national audience as human, as American, and as black simultaneously was thus in order.

Accordingly, *Black Boy's* unapologetic portrayal of a boy who is black, American, and human all at once impressed Ellison. Calling it Wright's “most successful book,” Ellison claimed that the “significant factor in *Black Boy* is that here there is no longer merely concern with communication, but a concern with definition. It's a move away from concern with race to a concern with the profoundly human—from a concern with the provincial to a concern with the universal, as found within the particulars of Negro personality and American life” (“American Negro Writing”). Just days after receiving Burke's letter about the need for a “universal” *rather* than “racial” ethics, Ellison here revealed the way in which *Black Boy* synthesized the two sides of this false dichotomy. Furthermore, the move in *Black Boy* from “communication” to “definition” reminds us of the shift Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* posits from “persuasion” to “identification,” emphasizing a rhetorical or literary gesture of consubstantiality between narrator (or writer) and reader.

Unsurprisingly, then, *Black Boy's* final lines articulate the importance of writing to a national project of humanization and of forging consubstantiality among differently racialized citizens. After picking up a pencil, Wright's writer-narrator

wanted to try to build a bridge of words between me and that world outside, that world which was so distant and elusive that it seemed unreal. I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of the hunger for life that gnaws in us all, to keep alive in our hearts a sense of the inexpressibly human. (R. Wright, *Black Boy* 384)

¹³ It is worth noting that *Invisible Man's* greatest admirers span the political spectrum: the more Leftist side includes Wright, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison; the more conservative side includes Saul Bellow, Harold Bloom, and Stanley Crouch.

Building “a bridge of words” is precisely what Ellison took to be the task of African-American writers in the middle of the twentieth century. He believed they were “called upon to create those values by which all Americans can live,” since “in a deeper sense the exploiter has been as much harmed as the exploited.” Ellison concluded his Bennington lecture on this note, after essentially heralding *Black Boy* as the most significant achievement in African-American writing to date:

In the years to come you may expect Negro writing to develop a sub[tlety] of ideas, concepts, and techniques missing from American literature since the days of Melville and Poe. It looks forward toward full integration with the main stream of American literature, and a revitalization of it under the pressure springing from the Negro predicament. This will mean, of course, a transformation of American culture. (“American Negro Writing”)

That Ellison hopes for a thematic and formal “subtlety” à la Melville and Poe indicates that he wants the communicative functions of African-American writing to operate almost on a subliminal level. Fiction, too, might be better suited to this project than is a memoir like *Black Boy* (despite that work’s various fictional qualities), because it can sustain a rhetorical relationship between narrator and reader without claiming to be “persuasive.” As Burke notes in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, fiction can convey its messages more through symbol and “cunning,” pretending “to have ignored rhetorical considerations,” even though these considerations are merely “disguised or transformed” (37).

So, for Ellison, the major “transformation of American culture” that black writers might enable can come only from a literature that reminds readers of American literary classics and, more importantly, of the larger cultural world that the characters, writers, and readers inhabit together. He agreed with Burke’s critique of Wright’s aesthetics, eventually saying, “In my own work, [...] I am aiming at something I believe to be broader, more psychological, and employing a scale, let us say, of twelve tones rather than one of five. [...] I should like an esthetic which restores to man his full complexity.” Describing the early drafts of *Invisible Man*, Ellison noted, “In my novel I’ve deliberately written in the first person, couched much of it in highly intellectualized concepts, and proceeded across a tight rope stretched between the comic and the tragic; but withal I don’t know where I’m going. For in our culture the blacks have learned to laugh at what brings tears to white eyes and vice versa, and that makes it hard as hell for a Negro writer to call his shots” (Letter to Burke). If *Native Son* was too affected and stereotypical, and *Black Boy* was too logical and (for a memoir) conventionally iconoclastic, *Invisible Man* should feature a black narrator who—as Burke put it in his December 16, 1945, reply to Ellison’s letter—is neither “a magical concession to the Whites” nor “a purely rationalistic intellectual.”¹⁴ First-person narration would help to achieve the goal of *ethos*-based identification wherein the speaker’s self-displayed personal character, as well as his understanding of the “national American character,” could attempt rhetorical consubstantiality with diverse audiences. An emphasis on symbolic (that is, shared cultural) registers, rather than on

¹⁴ The Library of Congress’s Ralph Ellison Papers (Box I, Container 76, Folder 5) include an undated fragment (the final page) of a letter from Ellison to Wright, probably penned in August 1945, which remarks: “Briefly, *Black Boy* is positive politically because it faced a tough situation honestly. But in a formal artistic sense it is regressive, because you returned to an earlier form in order to coordinate your political and artistic purpose. From a position of Marxist optimism, humanism in *Native Son* and *Twelve Million Black Voices*, you return to a stoicism like that of Hemingway’s characters, in *Black Boy*. When I look at the political implications and the effectiveness of the Book as a work of art I see it as being at once more basic (in that it is concerned only with fundamentals without illusions, which is the essence of the blues attitude) than you [sic] previous work, and less broad, because you have inverted your idealism and put your humanism in storage for more stable times. When Richard Wright exhibits the blues attitude that is a profound criticism of the present political atmosphere [sic] and of his own previous writings—even though an incomplete one.”

logical or sentimental registers, might be the only way to captivate so many different readers, arriving at a universal (or, at least, national) ethics “through the racial grain of sand” (Ellison, Letter to Burke).

Invisible Man: A Theory and Practice of Rhetorical Ethos

Ever since *Invisible Man* was published in 1952, readers and scholars have recognized its many oratorical components and also its interest in democracy.¹⁵ What we so far have missed, however, is the fact that what brings oratory and democracy together in the novel is the narrator’s relentless testing of rhetorical *ethos* and consubstantiality. In the novel’s inner frame, this testing takes place through embodied speeches that the narrator delivers to sizable audiences; in the outer frame, it occurs in his complete narrative address to his readers. Ellison was quite conscious of his narrator’s role as both speaker and author, noting in later essays and lectures that the young man undergoes “a transformation from ranter to writer” and that, “although *Invisible Man* is *my* novel, it is really *his* memoir. I’m a little prejudiced here, because I do feel that books represent socially useful acts—so we can say that” (“Change and Joke” 111; “On Initiation Rites” 537). What this means, then, is that *Invisible Man* is a work of both rhetorical theory and rhetorical practice, showing us the possibilities of *ethos* as a “useful” rhetorical form that (especially when it features a minority speaker addressing a national audience) can bridge social divides and strengthen the pluralistic democracy.

Invisible Man’s narrator leads us through a series of speeches from a wide variety of speakers (himself included), but it takes him quite some time to realize the necessity of *ethos* and consubstantiality to achieving his rhetorical goals. Among the rhetoricians the narrator encounters in the portion of his life that he recounts to his readers are: the poor, incestuous “sharecropper who had brought disgrace upon the black community,” Jim Trueblood; the impassioned blind Chicagoan Reverend Homer A. Barbee; the militant black nationalist Ras the Exhorter; and the whole network of seemingly communistic “Brotherhood” members (Ellison, *Invisible Man* 46).¹⁶ He also recalls important orators of the past: Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, and “the Founder” of the black college in the South that the narrator attends until its current president surreptitiously expels him. In other words, he lives in a world full of fervent speechmaking, a network in which he has long aspired to (and ultimately does) participate. As Ellison explained in a 1955 interview, recalling James Joyce’s *Künstlerroman*, *Invisible Man* “is the portrait of the artist as a rabble-rouser” (“Art of Fiction” 220). It behooves us, then, to pay closer attention to some of the oratorical stops on the itinerary that *Invisible Man* creates for its readers, as these moments reveal the narrator’s motives, errors, and epiphanies—all of which teach us an important lesson in rhetoric.

The first and most famous scene that showcases the narrator’s oratory is that of the “battle royal” (a draft of which Ellison read aloud at Burke’s home in 1951), which depicts the origins of the

¹⁵ Marcellus Blount, Christopher Hanlon, and Timothy Parrish, for instance, all view the narrator’s “collaboration with [his] audience” as a “democratic” act that maintains the “distinctive language of Afro-American sustenance and cultural renewal” while reminding (American) readers of all stripes “that the very conditions of [our] dream of equality must imbue all of our present and future actions” (Hanlon 91; Blount 687; Parrish 139–40). Likewise, Gerald T. Gordon identifies the novel’s thematic and formal interests in the “American acculturation process,” which Nathan A. Scott, Jr., interprets as “the dream of *communitas*” for “the American situation of our own immediate present” (Gordon 209; Scott 316). Finally, Ross Posnock points out the pragmatist Burkean framework of *Invisible Man* that conceives “the aesthetic as a supple mode of conduct that thrives in, rather than being inimical to, democratic turbulence” (323). Still, all of these scholars elide the extensive degree to which Ellison (like Burke) was concerned with theories of communication—theories that he translated to the domain of fiction, where minority writers and narrators in the postwar U.S. might be most likely to persuade and achieve identification with readers of diverse backgrounds.

¹⁶ I cite *Invisible Man* as “*IM*” hereafter.

young black speaker's pragmatism.¹⁷ Still, this pragmatic oratory is at once dishonest, obsequious, and naïve, never attempting to achieve true consubstantiality with its audience. The narrator recalls:

On my graduation day I delivered an oration in which I showed that humility was the secret, indeed, the very essence of progress. (Not that I believed this [...]—I only believed that it worked.) It was a great success. Everyone praised me and I was invited to give the speech at a gathering of the town's leading white citizens. It was a triumph for our whole community. (*IM* 16–17)

In these early days, the narrator visualizes himself “as a potential Booker T. Washington” and therefore seeks to find uplift through speeches that are conciliatory to the racist status quo (*IM* 18). He does not care that the politics that emanate from such words do not match his own beliefs, since his version of pragmatism defines “success” as the receipt of rousing approval from the establishment. Importantly, both his invitation and the “gathering of the town's leading white citizens” turn out to be far less dignified than they at first might sound: the narrator finds himself shirtless and blindfolded, sparring in a dark and smoky room with several other young black men—all a show for wealthy white spectators. Thus, his invitation to speak comes in exchange for his contribution to this degrading performance, and the narrator quickly admits the fallacy of his earlier claim that the occasion was “a triumph for our whole community.”

While it takes him some time, the narrator eventually recognizes the error of his ways. After the president of his college, Dr. Bledsoe, demands that he take a leave of absence and try to find work in New York, the narrator comes to a clearer understanding of the similarities and differences between the Southern culture of his upbringing and the Northern culture of his present. This process allows him, after some struggle, to forge a connection with his new community and then to better comprehend U.S. society on the whole. Despite the disappointments of his experience in New York thus far, he finds solace in a street vendor's hot baked yam, which reminds him of his homeland, his genuine tastes, and his ability to combine these things with life in a new environment:

I took a bite, finding it as sweet and hot as any I'd ever had, and was overcome with such a surge of homesickness that I turned away to keep my control. I walked along, munching the yam, just as suddenly overcome by an intense feeling of freedom—simply because I was eating while walking along the street. It was exhilarating. I no longer had to worry about who saw me or about what was proper. To hell with all that, and as sweet as the yam actually was, it became like nectar with the thought. (*IM* 264)

Impressed by the narrator's love for the yams he is peddling, the vendor soon earns this admission from the transplanted Southerner: “They're my birthmark. I yam what I am!” (*IM* 266). At first glance, the above passage might appear to assert a newfound individualism, wherein the narrator ceases to care about social conventions and practices the “freedom” to do whatever he pleases. In reality, though, the narrator doubles down on his identification with two distinct cultural values: the

¹⁷ As Michael Burke recalled the occasion: “After the boxing the black youngsters, still in their trunks and sweaty from the fight, were led to an electrified carpet where they had to scramble for coins. Ralph described the convulsing bodies and the circle of reveling spectators, and I concentrated on the rag rug in front of the piano bench imagining a rich, red, ornamental Persian Carpet, with an electrical cord winding from the rug to the outlet on the wall by the bookshelf. I don't remember the Ellisons visiting often, or much of what went on, but I still have a clear picture of the boxers on our carpet” (M. Burke, “Visitors”; cf. Crable 79, 1n).

consumption of a hot, buttered yam—valued especially in his Southern birthplace—and the act of “eating while walking along the street,” valued especially in New York. The lesson is not to reject all cultural norms, but to recognize what these norms are, to make judgments regarding which ones to uphold and which ones to challenge, and to be honest in communicating the overlap (or lack thereof) between individual desire and social standards. As the narrator explains, “I had never formed a personal attitude toward so much. I had accepted the accepted attitudes and it had made life seem simple...” (*IM* 267). The aim is to reject unconscious imitation and uncritical conformity, in favor of social awareness and democratic participation, intensely challenging as this is for a young black man in the Jim Crow U.S.

If eating yams on the street seems far afield from oratory or rhetorical consubstantiality, we should remember that this moment in the novel immediately precedes the famous Harlem eviction scene, in which the narrator first establishes himself as a local rhetorician of note. At first, he is shocked to discover that an elderly black couple could be ousted from their apartment in the North: “They can do that up *here*?” he asks. A local resident responds, “Man, where *you* from? What does it look they puttin’ them out of, a Pullman car? They being evicted!” Another Harlemiter snickers, “Where did *he* come from?” Embarrassed, the narrator still manages a tough exterior: “Never mind, I am who I am” (*IM* 269). A friction emerges between the “outsider” status of the confused Southern transplant and the New Yorkers who already are angered by the ongoing eviction. The narrator’s “I am who I am,” while nearly a repetition of his previous “I yam what I am,” registers a sort of self-esteem unconcerned with how little it might jibe with the identity of the Harlemites. To a significant degree, though, this friction or separation between the Southern transplant and his new neighbors in New York breaks down when he begins to *identify with* the elderly couple and with the crowd watching their displacement from their home. Of the onlookers, the narrator says:

Now I recognized a self-consciousness about them, as though they, we, were ashamed to witness the eviction, as though we were all unwilling intruders upon some shameful event; and thus we were careful not to touch or stare too hard at the effects that lined the curb; for we were witnesses of what we did not wish to see, though curious, fascinated, despite our shame, and through it all the old female, mind-plunging crying. [...] I was wary of what the sight of [the elderly couple] crying there on the sidewalk was making me begin to feel. I wanted to leave, but was too ashamed to leave, was rapidly becoming too much a part of it to leave. (*IM* 270–71)

The “they” that at first indicates the narrator’s separation of the Harlemiter eviction witnesses from himself quickly becomes an inclusive “we,” repeated four times before a final collective “our.” He cannot help being roused by the elderly couple’s displacement and tears, and he ultimately finds himself in the swift process of “rapidly becoming *too much a part of*” the situation, the neighborhood, and the community “to leave.” Here, we have the beginnings of a consubstantiality that emerges from the narrator’s witnessing. As he later admits, “it was as though I myself was being dispossessed of some painful yet precious thing which I could not bear to lose. [...] And with this sense of dispossession came a pang of recognition: this junk, these shabby chairs, these heavy, old-fashioned pressing irons, zinc wash tubs with dented bottoms”—strewn along the street outside the apartment—“all throbbed within me more meaning than there should have been” (*IM* 273).

It does not take long for the narrator to start translating his *receptive* consubstantiality with these Harlemites into a *productive* consubstantiality through speech of his own. Importantly, his oratory begins as something unintentional. He recounts the moment when he sensed that members of the crowd were about to attack an officer who was removing the elderly couple’s belongings from their home: “there boiled up [in me] all the shock-absorbing phrases that I had learned all my life. I

seemed to totter on the edge of a great dark hole. ‘No, no,’ I heard myself yelling. ‘Black men! Brothers! Black Brothers! That’s not the way. We’re law-abiding. We’re a law-abiding people and a slow-to-anger people!’” (*IM* 275). The description of a “boiling up” and the phrase “heard myself yelling” demonstrate the narrator’s lack of conscious control over his words. Some of this unconscious verbalization emerges out of a surge of spontaneous identification with his “Black Brothers,” but a greater force still is the involuntary recapitulation of “shock-absorbing,” rebellion-quelling, obsequious “phrases” that his Southern upbringing has inculcated into him. Calls for black docility and submission to law and order do not go over well with the Harlem crowd, so tired of seeing the law deprive their community again and again. For a moment, the narrator’s rhetoric regenerates the discord of “sensibilities” and values between himself and the Harlemites, who find little reason to listen to a carpetbagger. John Callahan argues that *Invisible Man*’s narrator “is a failed orator,” because for “a long time he underestimates the dynamic mutual awareness required between performer and audience for an improvisation to become eloquent. But gradually—too late for a career as an orator, in time for his vocation as a writer—he learns to challenge his audience’s skills as well as his own” (59). Because the narrator “is out of touch, too much an isolated solitary traveler, too much in the grip of illusion,” and “he fails to intuit or analyze his context,” Callahan writes, his “eviction speech seems an absurdity,” its words mismatching “the people’s mood” and leading to a result that contradicts their intention (60–61, 66). This result, of course, is the crowd’s disobeying the officer’s orders and reinserting the evicted couple’s furniture and belongings into the apartment.

Callahan is right to point out the narrator’s great struggles with oratory in the eviction scene and throughout the novel, as well as to note that some form of consubstantiality (“dynamic mutual awareness,” being in “touch” with and sharing the “mood” of one’s audience) is essential for rhetorical eloquence. However, his claim that the narrator must “challenge his audience’s skills”—and the later suggestion that his oratory fails because “he follows the lead of his audience,” “his right to leadership” belied by “his essentially passive role in the people’s action”—overstates the aggressiveness necessary for effective rhetoric (Callahan 68). If anything, the more conciliatory moments of the eviction speech are the most rhetorically successful, aiding in a sort of neighborhood rapport that strengthens their collective identity against a disproportionately oppressive legal structure (and toward a better realization of the nation’s democratic principles).

Without a doubt, the narrator’s oration begins out of a deference to normative Southern discourse that consistently pressures African Americans to obey the law at their own expense, and he struggles mightily to reach an “accord of sensibilities” with his new Northern neighbors. Nevertheless, he does find a way—flimsy and fleeting as it might be—to reconcile his call for legal compliance with the values of the Harlem crowd. “We’re dispossessed,” the narrator yells,

dispossessed and we want to pray. Let’s go in and pray. Let’s have a big prayer meeting. But we’ll need some chairs to sit in...rest upon as we kneel. We’ll need some chairs! [...] Take it all, hide that junk! Put it back where it came from. It’s blocking the street and the sidewalk, and that’s against the law. We’re law-abiding, so clear the street of the debris. Put it out of sight! Hide it, hide their shame! Hide *our* shame! (*IM* 281)

One Harlemite affirms, “We ought to done this long ago,” while another says, “Black men, I’m proud of you. Proud!” (*IM* 281). The narrator’s rhetoric expands the evicted couple’s immediate dispossession (of their home and physical *belongings*) into a recognition of communal dispossession, which in turn creates a sense of *belonging* for the narrator among the Harlemites. “Their shame” becomes “*our* shame.” Furthermore, while the group’s act of refurnishing the apartment is against the law, so too is the fact that the couple’s displaced possessions are “blocking the street and the

sidewalk.” The narrator’s lack of experience with Northerners and with spontaneous oratory causes some miscalculations and bumbles, but the beginnings of consubstantiality emerge nonetheless. He moves from “Oh, God, this wasn’t it at all. Poor technique and not at all what I intended”—when he thinks the Harlemites will injure the white officer, despite his calls for nonviolence—to “It became too much for me. The whole thing had gotten out of hand. What had I said to bring on all this?” after the crowd decides to refurbish the apartment (*IM* 276, 284). The narrator still has much work to do, but the form of disobedience that the Harlemites eventually elect is nonviolent (what he facetiously calls “a clean-up campaign”), as opposed to the direction (toward physical assault) in which they were heading before the oration. While not yet developed, and not yet fully in tune with the Harlemites’ “sensibilities,” the narrator’s rhetoric still accomplishes something powerful.

(White) members of the Brotherhood organization who are present at the eviction recognize the narrator’s rhetorical power more so than he does, yet they do not understand this power’s origins or best uses. Whereas the narrator is worried about the still-present possibility of violence—now that a number of additional police officers have arrived on the scene—two Brotherhood affiliates appear unconcerned and compliment him on his oratorical achievements. “Brother, that was a quite a speech you made,” one says. “I heard just the end of it, but you certainly moved them to action” (*IM* 284). A bit later, the head of the organization, Brother Jack, praises him for his “masterful bit of persuasion. [...] I haven’t heard such an effective piece of eloquence since the days when I was in—well, in a long time. You aroused them so quickly to action” (*IM* 287, 289). After the narrator tells Brother Jack that the evicted elderly couple reminded him of people he knows, the Brotherhood leader dismisses this crucial connection, saying, “Oh, no, brother; you’re mistaken and you’re sentimental. You’re not like them. Perhaps you were, but you’re not any longer. Otherwise you’d never have made that speech” (*IM* 291). Ironically, Brother Jack and his compatriots’ calling the narrator “brother” registers a consubstantiality between the narrator and the Brotherhood, *against* any alignment with the black Harlem residents. Brother Jack views oratory as a top-down mode wherein the supposed superiority of a scientific, logical collective should coax the uneducated and inarticulate black masses into a “history-making” political revolt. This view is misguided, but so too is the narrator’s notion (shared by Callahan) that the eviction speech was *entirely* unsuccessful in rousing its listeners “to action.” A nascent consubstantiality (which the narrator, unlike Brother Jack, recognizes—but does not yet view as a *rhetorical* achievement) brews in the eviction speech, as does an emergent consubstantiality between the narrator and the (protest-valuing) Brotherhood.¹⁸ Herein lies the rub: since the Brotherhood and the Harlem community are themselves not truly aligned, and the narrator achieves only partial consubstantiality with each contingent, a lack of overall group identity remains. Since, as we have seen, Ellison was long intrigued by the possibilities of rhetorical and literary expressions as “socially useful acts,” we should recognize the truth of the Brotherhood’s claims that the narrator’s oratory accomplished *something*—even if this something is inchoate.

Although the narrator initially rejects Brother Jack’s offer to join the Brotherhood, the compensation and the opportunity to orate on a large stage make the proposal too good to pass up.¹⁹ Importantly, when the young man delivers his first oration in this professional role, he

¹⁸ More evidence for the eviction speech’s (somewhat accidental) forging of consubstantiality between the narrator and the Brotherhood comes from the fact that, just before the additional police arrive on the scene, one Brotherhood affiliate calls out, “Why don’t we stage a march?”—and the narrator recounts his reaction: “‘Why don’t we march!’ I yelled out to the sidewalk before I had time to think” (*IM* 282).

¹⁹ As the narrator first puts it, “It was, after all, a job that promised to exercise my talent for public speaking, and if the pay was anything at all it would be more than I had now” (*IM* 298). Later, he finds out that the starting salary is “sixty dollars a week” and reasons, “At least they’ve invited me, one of us, in at the beginning of something big; and besides, if I refused to join them, where would I go—to a job as a porter at the railroad station? At least here was a chance to speak” (*IM* 310, 308).

massively strengthens his consubstantiality with the Harlem community—but at the cost of damaging the consubstantiality he had forged previously with the Brotherhood. The speech, and the young man’s narrative contextualization of it, consistently reveals a tension between his original plan to manipulate his audience through Brotherhood-endorsed rhetorical techniques and his eventual identification with the audience via verbal call-and-response. After a few stilted words, the narrator tells us, “I was getting off to a bad start, something had to be done”; he decides to crack a joke about the microphone looking “like the steel skull of a man! Do you think he died of dispossession? It worked,” garnering the audience’s laughter and applause (*IM* 341). When he then says to the crowd, “You see, all I needed was a chance. You’ve granted it, now it’s up to me!” he hears a voice reply, “We with you, Brother. You pitch ’em we catch ’em!” (*IM* 341, 342). As with his high school graduation (and battle royal) speech, the narrator’s concern here is with what needs “to be done”—with what “works”—more so than with learning from or getting to know his audience. He thinks of his listeners’ agreement as an early hook that later will enable him to inculcate into them the ideologies of the Brotherhood. So, the male voice’s “We with you, Brother,” registers to the narrator as evidence of top-down oratorical success, rather than a forging of side-by-side consubstantiality. He initially interprets the metaphor “You pitch ’em we catch ’em”—which becomes quite important to this scene in the novel—as a fallacious belief he has managed to engender in his listeners to keep their attention, rather than as an accurate portrayal of the rhetorical scenario. “That was all I needed,” the narrator tells us.

I’d made a contact, and it was as though his voice was that of them all.... I couldn’t remember the correct words and phrases from the [Brotherhood’s] pamphlets. I had to fall back upon tradition and since it was a political meeting, I selected one of the political techniques that I’d heard so often at home: The old down-to-earth, I’m-sick-and-tired-of-the-way-they’ve-been-treating-us approach. (*IM* 342)

Once again, the narrator reverts to the rhetorical norms of his Southern upbringing, thinking of them as hackneyed yet effective modes of manipulative persuasion, rather than as legitimate methods of community formation. The audience already appears to him as a unit (with one voice being “that of them all”), and, ironically, his failure to remember the official Brotherhood language leads him unintentionally to join the Harlemites’ team. The rhetorical baseball game begins.

In this case of budding rhetorical consubstantiality, wherein the speaker and the audience are “on the same team,” the former takes on the roles of pitching and pitch selection, while the latter takes on the roles of catching and calling balls and strikes. The narrator recounts:

“You know, there are those who think we who are gathered here are dumb,” I shouted. “Tell me if I’m right.”
 “That’s a strike, Brother,” the voice called. “You pitched a strike.”
 “Yes, they think we’re dumb. They call us the ‘common people.’ But I’ve been sitting here listening and looking and trying to understand what’s so *common* about us. I think they’re guilty of a gross mis-statement of fact—we are the uncommon people—”
 “Another strike,” the voice called in the thunder, and I paused holding up my hand to halt the noise.
 “Yes, we’re the uncommon people—and I’ll tell you why. [...] These are the days of dispossession, the season of homelessness, the time of evictions. We’ll be dispossessed of the very brains in our heads! And we’re so *un*-common that we can’t even see it! Perhaps we’re too polite.” (*IM* 342–43)

By invoking a form of rhetorical call and response, the narrator starts to cooperate with his listeners, asking them to verify the claims he makes. He bonds with them by using the collective “we,” “us,” and “our,” positioned against a rather vague “those” and “they,” referring to any and all agents of disempowerment. (Later on, he identifies this collective opponent only a bit more clearly—as discriminatory laws, officers, and those empowered by such laws and officers.) When the narrator reminds the audience of its reputation as “common” and “dumb,” and then notes that in reality the audience is “uncommon” and on the verge of enlightenment, he hears a rush of approving “noise” and affirmations that he keeps throwing “strikes.” The Harlemites catch everything he sends their way rhetorically, and (even in more tonal or musical terms) he continues to find the right *pitch*.

Soon, the narrator cranks up the consubstantiality by suggesting that he and his listeners switch positions; he encourages the remaining skeptics in the room to join the team, telling them he is perfectly willing to play catcher as well: “I say come on, cross over! Let’s make an alliance! I’ll look out for you, and you look out for me! I’m good at catching and I’ve got a damn good pitching arm!” Immediately, he hears from the crowd, “You don’t pitch no balls, Brother! Not a single one! (*IM* 344). At this point, the game seems to be moving along very well for the speaker-audience team, but after a natural pause in the narrator’s oration, he realizes that “the flow of words had stopped” and suddenly refocuses his attention on fulfilling the task the Brotherhood has hired him to perform. Interestingly, in recalling (to us readers) his thoughts at this moment in the speech, the narrator describes himself and his listeners in almost possessive terms: “They were mine, out there, and I couldn’t afford to lose them,” he tells us. “Yet I suddenly felt naked, sensing that the words were returning and that something was about to be said that I shouldn’t reveal” (*IM* 345). When he feels he has control over his words, he views himself as the audience’s owner: his listeners belong to him, and if not careful he could “lose” his property. But then, as in the eviction speech, the words begin to emerge inadvertently. The narrator admits that he is “from the South” and has not “lived here long,” before asking, “May I confess? [...] You are my friends. We share a common disinheritance, and it’s said that confession is good for the soul. Have I your permission?” (*IM* 345). Despite his return to interrogative language, his listeners sense the awkwardness of this shift in the speech, replying to the disclosure of his newcomer status with a metaphorical changing of teams: “‘You batting .500, Brother,’ the voice called.” (*IM* 345). That the narrator is now “batting,” as opposed to pitching or catching, indicates a brief point of rhetorical contention, yet the continuance of the label “Brother” and the high batting average suggest that, with a bit more care, he can get back on track.

The narrator accepts his listeners’ invitation and, from this point forward, identifies with them completely. He describes his game-changing “confession”: “‘*Something strange and miraculous and transforming is taking place in me right now...as I stand here before you!*’ I could feel the words forming themselves, slowly falling into place” (345). This somewhat impulsive transformation leads him at last to a durable consubstantiality with the Harlem audience. With their eyes upon him, hearing the pulse of their breathing, the narrator concludes his speech with the following declaration:

I feel suddenly that I have become *more human*. Do you understand? More human. [...] I feel that I can see sharp and clear and far down the dim corridor of history and in it I can hear the footsteps of militant fraternity! No, wait, let me confess ... I feel the urge to affirm my feelings ... I feel that here, after a long and desperate and uncommonly blind journey, I have come home ... Home! With your eyes upon me I feel that I’ve found my true family! My true people! My true country! I am a new citizen of the country of your vision, a native of your fraternal land. I feel that here tonight, in this old arena, the new is being born and the vital old revived. In each of you, in me, in us all. SISTERS! BROTHERS! WE ARE THE TRUE PATRIOTS!

THE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW'S WORLD! WE'LL BE DISPOSSESSED
NO MORE! (*IM* 346)

The narrator's phrase "more human" recalls the "inexpressibly human" from *Black Boy's* final lines, ultimately forging an alternative kind of nationalism with an audience that is his "family," his "people," his "country." Like Burke's interpretation of the economic and psychological mixture in Hitler's rhetoric, the narrator's speech here blends a Marxist language of exclamatory unification ("CITIZENS OF TOMORROW'S WORLD [...] DISPOSSESSED NO MORE!") with a *Gestalt* approach that scapegoats the dispossessing "law and order" as a global enemy and fashions group identification through the common experience of "a long and desperate and uncommonly blind journey." As Callahan puts it, the narrator's confessional form enables him to find "a community with shared values and objectives," within which "he and his audience, for an instant, become one" (69, 71). This oneness—forged out of common goals, principles, and sensibilities—is the quintessence of rhetorical *ethos* and consubstantiality.

Importantly, these concluding lines of the Harlem speech move it somewhat away from typical political (or "deliberative") rhetoric and into the realm of celebratory (or "epideictic") rhetoric—a shift that, as we will see, several members of the Brotherhood decry. In classical rhetorical theory, "deliberative" rhetoric is concerned primarily with the future—asking, *What actions should we take?*—whereas "epideictic" rhetoric is concerned primarily with the present: *Who are we, and what praise (or condemnation) do we currently deserve?*²⁰ *Ethos* is essential to all types of rhetoric, yet it is especially meaningful in epideictic contexts, whose focus is on personal and/or group identity. Bringing Burkean and Aristotelian theories more explicitly together, Dale L. Sullivan proposes "a definition of epideictic ethos as 'the consubstantial space which enfolds participants'" (114). Following Burke, Sullivan notes that the epideictic form is particularly well suited to literature, often a "display art" more so than an explicit argument (115, 116). He goes on to say that the epideictic speaker's *ethos* "may be summarized as the audience's recognition that the rhetor, as one who represents the culture, 'sees' reality as the culture sees it, experiences the numinous, meditates upon Being, and is able to evoke the numinous experience in others through the use of symbols" (Sullivan 122).²¹ While *Invisible Man's* narrator does not invoke the divine in his Harlem oration, his prophetic claim that he "can see sharp and clear and far down the dim corridor of history," his meditation on what it means to be "*more human*," and his references to baseball, eviction, and homelessness reinforce a sense of shared spiritual and cultural understanding within the arena. As we will see, by the point in his life when he has learned a great deal from his oratorical experiences and is finally ready to compose his memoir (Ellison's novel) for readers, the young man has become what Wayne Booth calls a "living oracle," a helpful authorial guide "to the moral truths of the world outside the book" (*The Rhetoric of Fiction* 221). Before making it this far, however, the narrator must navigate the dilemma in which he finds himself at the end of his Harlem speech: his enhanced consubstantiality with the Harlemites has come at the expense of a diminished consubstantiality with the Brotherhood.

Because the Brotherhood values deliberative, political rhetoric that achieves its ideological mission, the narrator's shift to an epideictic oration irks several of the organization's members. When the Brotherhood reconvenes in a small room behind the boisterous arena, one pipe-smoking

²⁰ The third classical rhetorical type is "forensic" (or legal) rhetoric, which is concerned primarily with the past. It asks, *What, in fact, happened? What series of events led up to the matter in question?*

²¹ As Sullivan points out, cultural representativeness is a major factor in the neo-Aristotelian and Burkean conception of (epideictic) rhetoric that Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca advance in *The New Rhetoric*, wherein "the speaker tries to establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience" (51; Sullivan 126).

member calls the event “a most unsatisfactory beginning,” telling the narrator that “the speech was wild, hysterical, politically irresponsible and dangerous. And worse than that, it was *incorrect!* [...] We are champions of a scientific approach to society, and such a speech as we’ve identified ourselves with tonight destroys everything that has been said before. The audience isn’t thinking, it’s yelling its head off” (*IM* 348–49, 350). The Brotherhood values *logos* and despises *pathos* in oratorical contexts: speeches should be logical, “scientific,” “correct,” and generative of “thinking,” rather than impassioned, “wild, hysterical,” or generative of “yelling.” As for *ethos*, the brothers’ concern is purely internal: the logical and the scientific are *their values*, meant to be imparted to “the people” in top-down fashion. What frustrates the Brotherhood, in fact, is explicitly a matter of rhetorical identification: the narrator has identified himself *professionally* as a Brotherhood representative while identifying himself *rhetorically* with (many of the existing symbols and values shared among) the Harlemites. Thus, the brother with the pipe can lament that “we’ve identified ourselves with” a collection of sensibilities that “destroys everything” the Brotherhood has “said before.”

Ultimately, the Brotherhood decides that the narrator’s deviation from their style and interests is an error so egregious that he will have “to stay completely out of Harlem”; still, he maintains a desire to be consubstantial with his listeners and communities (*IM* 351). He tells us:

I meant everything that I had said to the audience, even though I hadn’t known that I was going to say those things. [...] Even my technique had been different; no one who had known me at college would have recognized the speech. But that was as it should have been, for I *was* someone new—even though I had spoken in a very old-fashioned way. I had been transformed, and now, lying restlessly in bed in the dark, I felt a kind of affection for the blurred audience whose faces I had never clearly seen. They had been with me from the first word. They had wanted me to succeed, and fortunately I had spoken for them and they had recognized my words. I belonged to them. (*IM* 353)

Callahan argues that these last words, “I belonged to them,” signal “the dangerous contingency of improvisation—a speaker’s temptation to derive his identity from his audience”; the fact that the narrator’s “coherence as a human being depends on service and on confirmation by those served” evidently is destructive to the young black man (72). In contrast, I read the passage above as something much more equitable: an illustration of peer-to-peer exchange, rather than a reversal of the top-down model wherein the audience now has control over the speaker. “Belonging,” while it still carries its proprietary connotations, is in this context more about *bonding* than about *bondage*. As Sullivan explains in his account of epideictic *ethos*, “the audience must think of the rhetor as *one of their own*, preeminent among them, no doubt, but still *one who belongs to them*” (126, my emphases).

One of the great ironies in *Invisible Man* lies in the fact that (the very patriotic symbol of) “brotherhood” is what everyone is trying to achieve but often cannot sustain—whether it be the organization that calls itself by the same name; the voice in the crowd who shouts, “We with you, Brother!”; or the narrator who sees on the horizon a “militant fraternity” with his “SISTERS! BROTHERS!,” his “true family.” Rhetorical *ethos* and consubstantiality are rooted in the same fraternal principle. Etymologically, *ethos* means “dwelling place” (we might consider the similarities in English between the words *familial* and *familiar*—or *habitat* and *habit*), adding resonance to the narrator’s declaration, “I have come home ... Home!”²² As Sullivan explains, drawing on *ethos*’s etymology, “Ethos is not primarily an attribute of the speaker, nor even of audience perception: It is,

²² Martin Heidegger makes this etymological point about *ethos* in his 1947 “Letter on Humanism” (233–34), as does Kathy Eden in her 2012 book *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (18–19).

instead, the common dwelling place of both, the timeless, consubstantial space that enfolds participants,” who as peers (or spiritual siblings) practice a “mutual contemplation of reality” (127, 128). Ultimately, it “is primarily the rhetor’s responsibility to carve out a consubstantial space in which the epideictic encounter can take place, but it is up to the audience to enter that space and participate in the celebration” (Sullivan 128). Just as much as *Invisible Man*’s narrator “belonged to” his listeners, they “had been with” him “from the first word,” he “had spoken for them, and they had recognized [his] words.” This last part is crucial.

The phrase “spoken for them” matches the final four words of *Invisible Man*—“I speak for you”—and the fact that the narrator describes his Harlem listeners as “blurred,” people “whose faces I had never clearly seen,” matches the relationship he has to his memoir-readers (and that Ellison had to the vast majority of his novel-readers). Just as he is “an invisible man,” his readerly audience is largely invisible to him as well. Callahan argues that the narrator’s oratory “fails” throughout the plot of the novel—either because of his obsequious contingency or because of his “presumptuously and blindly” articulated attempt “to lead his audience”—and that it is “the nature of literature” as a “symbolic” (rather than embodied) act that allows the narrator finally “to make contact on an equal individual basis” (87). Ostensibly, he cannot force his readers to do anything, nor can his readers—with their energies, their interruptions, their questions—alter his rhetorical articulation. I contend, in contrast, that the narrator’s in-person oratory does not fail in all cases but, rather, constitutes an ongoing process of trial and error from which he learns a great deal. In a letter he wrote to Ellison more than forty years after *Invisible Man*’s publication, Burke called the novel “an epoch-making *Bildungsroman*,” a story of “Education,” relating the narrator’s “step from apprenticeship to journeymanship.” Over the course of his travels, according to Burke, the narrator learns that, although “‘ideological’ prejudices (and I would call the black-white issue a branch of such) make humans ‘apart from’ one another, we are all, for better or worse, ‘part of’ one humankind—and, at least on paper, an amended U.S. Constitution holds out that same promise to us all” (“Trueblooded” 350–53).²³ Indeed, while many of the narrator’s oratorical gestures might be failures not to repeat, at least some of them are successes to remember and engage again.

Despite (or, in fact, *because of*) his inability to bring the Brotherhood and Harlemites together in harmony, the narrator concludes that a pluralistic *ethos*—rendered on the pages of his memoir—is the most effective way to come to terms with himself, to connect with readers (or people) of vastly different sociopolitical positions, and to bring the ideals of American democracy closer to reality. Within the *plot* of *Invisible Man*, his valiant efforts are not enough to prevent discord. Brother Jack hisses that the Brotherhood will never shape its “policies to the mistaken and infantile notions of the man in the street. Our job is not to *ask* them what they think but to *tell* them!”—and the narrator holds onto his Brotherhood affiliation too long, allowing the black nationalist Ras the Destroyer to call him a “lying traitor” and to coax the bulk of the Harlemites into a riot that nearly leads to the narrator’s hanging (*IM* 473, 558). Having found it impossible to sustain consubstantiality with (or

²³ At another point, *Invisible Man*’s narrator says, “And here’s the cream of the joke: Weren’t we *part of them* as well as apart from them and subject to die when they died?” (575), recalling lines 31–36 of Langston Hughes’s poem “Theme for English B”:

You are white—
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
That’s American.
Sometimes perhaps you don’t want to be a part of me.
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
But we are, that’s true!

This poem comes from the book *Montage of a Dream Deferred*, which Hughes published in 1951 and dedicated to Ellison and his wife, Fanny. Furthermore, Hughes is the one who introduced Ellison to Malraux’s work in 1937.

bring together) the two socially divided groups that are the Brotherhood and Harlem, he slips down a manhole and into the makeshift cellar where he starts his final rhetorical gesture of consubstantiality: his *ethos*-infused memoir for American readers of all stripes. “So why do I write, torturing myself to put it down?” he asks. “Because in spite of myself I’ve learned some things” (*IM* 579).

Burke knew well that *e pluribus unum* was the narrator’s greatest insight in *Invisible Man*, not only because the narrator says so but also because the theory of consubstantiality in *A Rhetoric of Motives* works the same way: two interlocutors who identify with each other through symbolic language become “substantially one,” even as each “remains unique, an individual locus of motives.” The narrator summarizes his coming-of-age process with these words:

I lived a public life and attempted to function under the assumption that the world was solid and all the relationships therein. Now I know men are different and that all life is divided and that only in division is there true health. Hence again I have stayed in my hole, because up above there’s an increasing passion to make men conform to a pattern. [...] Our fate is to become one, and yet many— This is not prophecy, but description. (*IM* 576–77)

The imperative is an *ethos* of social unity that embraces—and emerges from—social divisions. Such an *ethos* can start in a private “hole” underground, but it ultimately must resurface to fulfill its duty. This rhetorical resurfacing is precisely how the narrator concludes his memoir. After suggesting that the overstaying of his “hibernation” might be his “greatest social crime,” since “even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play,” the narrator addresses his readers directly, telling us that his mission has been twofold (*IM* 581). First, he hopes his memoir will get Americans of all stripes to pay attention to the words of “a little black man” “with only a certain eloquence and a bottomless capacity for being a fool” (*IM* 558–59). Second, the narrator wants to show us, his readers, things that he has seen but that we so far have overlooked in the world we inhabit together:

‘Ah,’ I can hear you say, ‘so it was all a build-up to bore us with his buggy jiving. He only wanted us to listen to him rave!’ But only partially true: Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through? And it is this which frightens me: Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?” (*IM* 581)

The narrator’s self-identification as a “disembodied voice” illuminates the importance for African Americans (and for other U.S. minorities) of rhetorical *ethos* through writing. If the visual elements of oratory in the flesh make it all the more difficult for “a little black man” to secure active listeners, words themselves (rendered on a page, not emanating from a visible body) might produce better results. Finally, the narrator speaks “on the lower frequencies”—the present yet less readily audible currents of language as symbolic action—and he speaks “for” us. The preposition “for” carries several connotations: he speaks *as a gift to us, on behalf of us, in exchange for our attention, and even to preserve our existence*. That he uses the word “speak,” rather than “write,” indicates that he draws little separation between the two verbs. Because, in his memoir, the narrator remains nameless and invisible, his being (for us readers, anyway) is constituted entirely by his words—“black” ink on “white” paper. If, from these words alone, we can identify with the narrator—achieve consubstantiality with this “little black man”—his practice of rhetorical *ethos* has succeeded.

The Legacy of *Invisible Man*

While Ellison clearly viewed literary fiction through a rhetorical lens while composing *Invisible Man*, he made this view especially evident in essays and interviews published after his novel's release. In 1957, he wrote that "the novel is rhetorical," "basically a form of communication" in which "there must exist" between writer and reader "a body of shared assumptions concerning reality and necessity, possibility and freedom, personality and value, along with a body of feelings, both rational and irrational, which arise from the particular circumstances of their mutual society" (Ellison, "Society" 696, 697). Importantly, Ellison believed these "shared assumptions," values, and social circumstances materialized through a continual negotiation between *establishment* (forced, historical conditioning) and *revision* (willed rearrangement in the present). In 1971, he taught his first course at New York University—"The American Vernacular as Symbolic Action"—whose syllabus included scholarly texts by Burke, Constance Rourke (*American Humor: A Study of the National Character*, 1931), Hugh Dalziel Duncan (*Communication and Social Order*, 1962), and Richard Bridgman (*The Colloquial Style in America*, 1966), as well as fiction by Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Henry James, William Faulkner, Saul Bellow, and Richard Wright. In his lecture notes, Ellison wrote, "Any understanding of social order requires attention to the ways in which human beings communicate. Human society exists in the communication of values, or principles. [...] Social integration requires the maintenance of sacred codes of conduct, but it also requires sanctioned ways of revising such codes when their integrative power fails."²⁴ If certain normative "codes of conduct" keep the society segregated—as has been the case with the U.S. throughout its history, especially during Jim Crow—we need forms of communication that can reorganize these codes to allow for greater integration.

For Ellison, novelists and narrators play a crucial role in this process, using fiction to sculpt shared assumptions, values, and codes of conduct into a convincing rhetorical appeal that can cut across a wide variety of social divides. How, he later asked, might "the rhetoric of American fiction" capture "the enigma of aesthetic communication in American democracy" and achieve a readership that finally is "exhorted, persuaded, even wooed"? (Ellison, "The Little Man" 492). "How does one in the novel (the novel which is a work of art and not a disguised piece of sociology) persuade the American reader to identify that which is basic in man, beyond all differences of class, race, wealth or formal education?" Ultimately, he concluded, the challenge of communicative social integration "cannot be answered by criticism" (or "sociology"), a realm too indebted to *logos* as a mode of explanation (Ellison, "Society" 724–25). Instead, we need a language that *shows* rather than *tells*, emphasizing *ethos* in a fictive depiction of symbols and styles with which diverse readers can identify.

Ellison recognized the complexities of fiction as a venue for a rhetorical *ethos* of cultural pluralism, and he viewed the success of his own novel as a reiteration of this fact. "There is a rhetoric of fiction," he told James Alan McPherson in 1970,

and in order to master the rhetoric of the form, you have to be aware of the people outside your immediate community. And the rhetoric depends upon not only a

²⁴ From the Library of Congress's Ralph Ellison Papers (Box I, Container 174, Folder 8). Ellison referred to such "values" or "codes of conduct" multiple times in his writerly career. For instance, he wrote in 1967 that the "novel is a form which deals with change in human personality and human society, bringing to the surface those values, patterns of conduct and dilemmas, psychological and technological, which abide within the human predicament" ("The Novel" 757). In describing his "(ideal) reader," Ellison said in 1974 that he had a "sense of the rhetorical levers within American society, and these attach to all kinds of experiences and values. I don't want to be a behaviorist here, but I'm referring to the systems of values, beliefs, customs, sense of the past, and that hope for the future which have evolved through the history of the Republic. These do provide a medium of communication" ("A Completion" 800).

knowledge of human passion, but the specific situations in which that passion is expressed: the manners, the formal patterns, and so on, as well as the political issues around which they are clustered. So that if our black writers are going to become more influential in the broader community, they will do it in terms of style: by imposing a style upon a sufficient area of American life to give other readers a sense that this is true, that here is a revelation of reality. (Ellison, “Indivisible” 364–65)

Once again, the priority for a rhetorical achievement of pluralism is not logic or even “passion” but “style.” Importantly, while writers or narrators should exhibit an understanding of current manners, patterns, and situations, Ellison believed they were capable of “imposing a style upon” American life. This is not to say, as the Brotherhood would, that rhetoric should function in top-down fashion. Rather, it is to say that black writers must not be afraid to showcase symbolic vocabularies and syntaxes that are at once “unique” and yet distinctly “American.” Getting readers to believe in the “reality” of the depicted society comes in part through confirming their existing beliefs but even more so through persuading them to see their world a bit differently.

The rhetorical *Gestalt* theory that Burke introduced to Ellison in 1939 thus remained with him throughout his life—its revised, novelistic iteration coming to the fore in Ellison’s various interpretations of *Invisible Man*’s widespread and enduring acclaim. In 1974, he told John Hershey that *Invisible Man* thrived because “deep down we believe in the underdog, even though we give him hell, and this provides a rhetoric through which the writer can communicate with a reader beyond any questions of their disagreements over class values, race or anything else” (Ellison, “Completion” 800). In 1979, he told an audience at Brown University that his “novel had become a lens through which readers of widely differing backgrounds were able to see elements of their own experience brought to a unifying focus” (Ellison, “Going” 598). Finally, in an extended introduction to *Invisible Man*—which Ellison prepared in 1981 for the novel’s thirtieth anniversary edition and which still adorns most copies bought and sold today—he noted that his task in writing the book was to surmount

the sheer rhetorical challenge involved in communicating across our barriers of race and religion, class, color and region—barriers which consist of the many strategies of division that were designed, and still function, to prevent what would otherwise have been a more or less natural recognition of the reality of black and white fraternity. And to defeat this national tendency to deny the common humanity shared by my character and those who might happen to read of his experience, I would have to provide him with something of a worldview. (*IM* xxii)

In the U.S. and elsewhere, “strategies of division” based on socially constructed axes of identity still functioned in 1981 and “still function” at present. Nonetheless, *Invisible Man*’s narrator exhibits in his memoir “a worldview” that, for more than six decades, has forged consubstantiality with readers across “barriers of race and religion, class, color and region,” so much so that the novel won the National Book Award for Fiction in 1953 and continues to be popular today. While *Invisible Man* is far from perfect, its effective rhetoric of *Gestalt* and symbol illustrates that—in our current age of “alternative facts,” in which *logos* has been so ineffective as a form of persuasion or linguistic identification—we need not double down on “rationality” and hope it returns to prominence, nor must we embrace *pathos*, sentimentality, or other predominantly affective rhetorical modes (which some might take to be *logos*’s more persuasive opposite). There is indeed a third way—the way of *ethos* and consubstantiality—that interpellates and affiliates with readers through stylistic, symbolic action. Let us learn from the example of the Invisible Man.

Chapter 2
Ethos as Spi/rituality:
The Character Witnesses of James Baldwin and Gordon Henry, Jr.

Introduction

If Ralph Ellison and Kenneth Burke together explored the possibilities of symbolic rhetoric in novelistic fiction and on the political stump, James Baldwin and Gordon Henry, Jr.—U.S. minority writers who follow in their wake—implore us to think more deeply about the rhetorical spaces of the theater and the courtroom. A U.S. legal structure that upholds white supremacy and settler colonialism pervades a number of rhetorical spaces in American life, yet it is especially intrusive in the space of the courtroom, which has very strict rules of engagement and which purports to be a realm where laws themselves, the “facts of the case,” and rational deliberation reign supreme. However, like the law and literature scholar James Boyd White, Baldwin and Henry—in addition to many of their minority literary speakers—know that the stated “rules” and the claims to “reason” almost never carry the persuasive force in a U.S. courtroom. Especially when minority subjects are the ones speaking on the witness stand, *logos*-based testimony hardly succeeds in convincing judges and juries. If any kind of “agreement” is going to emerge between black or indigenous witnesses and (non-black, non-indigenous) judges and juries, it will come from appeals to the *spirit*—from a sense that all the parties in the room are together involved in a meaningful *ritual* that sheds light on their “collective life” (White 698). This chapter explores *ethos* as *spi/rituality*, the confluence of spirit and ritual that can transpire in a space of physical co-presence, through rhetoric that seeks, as White puts it, to “constitute” (to characterize) the community that shares that space.

As we will see, *spi/rituality* is deeply related to the *consubstantiality* that we explored in the previous chapter, as both emphasize symbolic (rather than primarily rational or sentimental) modes of linguistic identification. But *spi/rituality*, as it is theorized and practiced in Baldwin’s 1964 play *Blues for Mister Charlie* and Henry’s 1994 multi-genre book *The Light People*, specifically accentuates ceremonial practices—rites—in which a group of people participates simultaneously. The space of the theater, like that of a church or another house of worship, often invites this type of ceremony in a way most novels do not. The space of the courtroom, on the other hand, tends to be less ceremonial in U.S. life, but that need not be the case. What the racially marginalized dramatis personae in Baldwin’s and Henry’s texts do is use the witness stand as a venue for critiquing the “rules” of the U.S. courtroom and for altering its rhetorical dynamics. By speaking *spi/ritually*, these characters hope to take their audiences (including us, the theatergoers or the readers) out of the “darkness” and into the “light.”

James Baldwin’s *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964)

When fourteen-year-old Emmett Till was assassinated in Mississippi in 1955 (and especially once his murderers were acquitted by an all-white, all-male jury), Baldwin for years could not stop thinking about the events that had transpired. He felt the need to write about the case, but neither a novel nor an essay would suffice. What Baldwin hoped to accomplish was to “draw a valid portrait of” the kind of contemporary human being who would murder a young teen simply for “wolf whistling” at a white woman—and, after drawing such a portrait, to present this murderer, his victim, and the community surrounding them to a live American audience who would be forced to confront all these characters face-to-face (*Blues* xiv). He needed to write a play.

Baldwin believed that the U.S.’s “racial situation” in the late 1950s and early 1960s was characterized by crimes “so great and so unspeakable” that recognizing these acts for what they truly

are “would lead, literally, to madness. The human being, then, in order to protect himself, closes his eyes, compulsively repeats his crimes, and enters a spiritual darkness which no one can describe” (xiv). These words come from the prefatory notes to *Blues for Mister Charlie*, the play of 1964 that is Baldwin’s attempt to stop the bleeding. He hoped to return Americans’ *spirits* to a place of light and possibility, by insisting (like Ellison’s narrator in *Invisible Man*) on the symbolic fraternity, the collectivity, and the humanity of Americans in the post–World War II era. It is from these forces, much more so than from logical appeals or sentimental outpourings, that violence might be quelled and community sustained.

As Koritha Mitchell has pointed out, Baldwin “acknowledges justified anger” at the systemic dehumanization and extermination of even the youngest black Americans, but because the root of the problem is a lack of fraternity and collectivity—of recognizing a shared humanity amid differences in race, class, region, and so on—anger “cannot become an obstacle to valuing human connection” (54). Hard as it may be to accept, the killer of a black boy like Till is no exception. At his core, the killer is a human like the rest of us, and we all share the blame for his heinous act, just as we all bear the responsibility of preventing further injustice. “But if it is true, and I believe it is, that all men are brothers,” Baldwin writes in *Blues*’s prefatory notes,

then we have the duty to try to understand this wretched man; and while we probably cannot hope to liberate him, begin working toward the liberation of his children. For we, the American people, have created him, he is our servant; it is we who put the cattle-prodder in his hands, and we are responsible for the crimes that he commits. It is we who have locked him in the prison of his color. It is we who have persuaded him that Negroes are worthless human beings, and that it is his sacred duty, as a white man, to protect the honor and purity of his tribe. It is we who have forbidden him, on pain of exclusion from the tribe, to accept his beginnings, when he and black people loved each other, and rejoice in them, and use them; it is we who have made it mandatory—honorable—that white father should deny black son. These are grave crimes indeed, and we have committed them and continue to commit them in order to make money. (xiv–xv)

As introductory notes, these words are never spoken on the stage or heard by theatergoers, yet they begin the process that the stage play seeks to accomplish. They assert a community between utterer and audience, repeating the pronoun “we” to refer to collective actions of the past, present, and future. A too-narrow tribalism is the overarching scourge Baldwin pleads his countrymen to critique and abandon. He condemns the money-making drive that keeps us from what W. E. B. Du Bois calls “the higher aims of life,” and he recognizes the vital role of “persuasion” in the society’s treatment of black Americans (35). If this preface to *Blues* sounds quite a bit like a church sermon (with its reference to a “sacred duty,” its phrase “and rejoice in them,” its description of “father” and “son”)—or if it resembles a lawyer’s closing arguments before a jury—it is because the play centers on the spaces of the church and the courtroom, both of which have failed, Baldwin tells us, to safeguard ethics and administer justice in American life.

Blues—which “takes place in Plaguetown, U.S.A.,” where the “plague is race, the plague is our concept of Christianity: and this raging plague has the power to destroy every human relationship”—features a set design that illuminates the complex connections between places of

worship and sites of jurisprudence in the mid-twentieth-century (xv).¹ In the first two acts, the stage directions note, the set's skeleton is "the Negro church"; in the third act, it is "the courthouse. The church and the courthouse are on opposite sides of a southern street; the audience should always be aware, during the first two acts, of the dome of the courthouse and the American flag. During the final act, the audience should always be aware of the steeple of the church, and the cross" (*Blues* 1). At first, it might appear that the separation among acts and the buildings' placement on opposing sides of the street indicate a stark disparity between African American religious practice and a white supremacist legal discourse. Such a disparity exists to a significant degree in Baldwin's play, but the stage directions' explanation that the steeple always haunts the courtroom, while the flag-adorned courthouse dome always haunts the church, illustrates how interconnected the two sites are in the mid-century U.S. In fact, the buildings share a similar interior layout:

The church is divided by an aisle. The street door upstage faces the audience. The pulpit is downstage, at an angle, so that the minister is simultaneously addressing the congregation and the audience. In the third act, the pulpit is replaced by the witness stand. This aisle also functions as the division between WHITETOWN and BLACKTOWN. The action among the blacks takes place on one side of the stage, the action among the whites on the opposite side of the stage—which is to be remembered during the third act, which takes place, of course, in a segregated courtroom. (*Blues* 1)

The play's stage directions therefore illuminate a contrast between the segregation of the civic spaces of Plaguetown and the integration of the civic space of the theater. If *Blues's* characters are physically separated from one another by race, the theatergoers should not be. As Soyica Diggs Colbert explains, Baldwin "attempted to claim the theater as a space of redress that could not be found in the courtroom or in the church," and he worked hard to keep ticket prices "to a maximum of \$4.80" so that low-income Americans, especially African Americans, could afford to see the show (171).² Furthermore, the positioning of the pulpit-cum-witness stand, so that it faces several audiences at once, accentuates the role of rhetorical (specifically *oratorical*) performance in contemporary American life.

Strikingly, Baldwin seems to have tweaked this particular element of *Blues's* architecture at the last minute. A Dial Press proof of the play sent to the Book of the Month Club just weeks before its opening night on April 23 and its print publication on May 12, 1964, looks almost identical to the final text, yet this slightly earlier version asks that the third act replace the pulpit not with the witness stand but, rather, with "the judge's bench."³ While this alteration may seem minor, given that the judge's bench and the witness stand are often right next to each other in a U.S. courtroom, it potentially marks a major shift in the rhetorical exchange between *Blues's* orators and their various audiences, both among the Plaguetown dramatis personae and the Broadway theatergoers. The play never shies away from exposing the damage of normatively authoritative speakers (preachers, judges, white men), but here it also presents an alternative kind of "faith,"

¹ Julius Fleming helpfully points out that, by writing "U.S.A." instead of a state name here, Baldwin reiterates that *Blues* is about a *national*, rather than a southern-regional, issue—and, likewise, the play and its characters are communicating to a national audience (or "public sphere") (53).

² Nicholas K. Davis also makes this point about *Blues*: "Since Baldwin trusts neither the church nor the courtroom to regulate, organize, or expose these depths of human experience, he has found a last remaining public space in which to present the dialectical complexities and intricate paradoxes of American life: the theatre" (39).

³ This proof is available in the Book-of-the-Month Club Records (Box 48, Folder 669) at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

“belief,” and “conviction”: a faith, a belief, and a conviction in the words of those witnesses whom the society marginalizes and discounts.⁴ These are the speakers who (in the theater, if not in real churches or courtrooms) might lead the nation out of its “spiritual darkness” and into the light.

If rhetorical *ethos*, in a neo-Aristotelian sense, can be understood as a mode of persuasion or linguistic identification that operates not so much on the level of rationality or of sentimentality but more so on the level of spi/rituality, we can better understand the profound connections among Baldwin’s famous critiques of “protest” fiction, his Pentecostal background, and his literary practice—all of which emerge in *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Mitchell reminds us that “theater had been central” in Baldwin’s decision to become a child preacher, as well as in his decision to renounce the ministry soon thereafter: “a black actor’s portrayal of Macbeth drove him to the pulpit at age fourteen and another’s rendering of Bigger Thomas gave him the strength to leave the church at age seventeen” (40). Why is this? In part, the embodied performance of black actors in an enclosed space of congregators can activate a great deal of power in both thespian and ecclesiastical contexts, though the latter (like a courtroom) might adhere more rigidly to doctrine. Colbert and E. Patrick Johnson both quote the prefatory notes to Baldwin’s earlier (and only other) play, *The Amen Corner* (1954), to elaborate on the religious origins of Baldwin’s theatrical style. “I knew that out of the ritual of the church,” the *Amen* notes explain, “comes the act of the theatre, the *communion* which is the theatre. And I knew that what I wanted to do in the theatre was to recreate moments I remembered as a boy preacher, to involve the people, even against their will, to shake them up, and, hopefully, to change them” (xvi, italics original). Among many other things, *communion* refers to the experience of togetherness, of “community,” formed through human socialization—as well as, in some Christian traditions, to the Eucharistic experience of togetherness with Jesus Christ.

Johnson points out that Baldwin’s use of the term *communion* relates to Victor Turner’s anthropological notion of “*communitas*”—a process of bonding through “nonrational, existential, I-Thou” relationships—which Baldwin’s theater itself achieves “through ritual performance” (Turner 274, qtd. in Johnson 88).⁵ Colbert thinks more about the Eucharistic, noting that “during the service of communion transubstantiation occurs, the wafer and the wine becoming literally the body and the blood of Christ,” but the “communion Baldwin describes, unlike some forms of the Christian one, does not attempt to reclaim the body; it strives [in *Blues for Mister Charlie*] to resurrect Richard’s voice, to name it, to incorporate it, and to hear its troubled cries” (161). Richard Henry is *Blues*’s less saintly adaptation of Emmett Till: a slightly older but still rather young black man who returns to his southern home of “Plaguetown” after nearly eight years away in the North, only to be murdered by a white man who cannot stand Richard’s emasculating “bravado.” In death, Richard’s body no longer acts. The play quite literally shows his body only for a few seconds at the very beginning, when Richard’s assassin, Lyle Britten, tosses it in the “gulf” that then turns into the “aisle” of the church and of the courtroom. What remains, even after his death, is Richard’s *voice*, suggesting that *Blues*’s obvious interest in the bodily togetherness of theatergoers—as opposed to the physical segregation of its black and white characters—has to do primarily with the creation of an audience that collectively hears and interprets *speech* and *words*.

Considering this emphasis on verbal language, in addition to the palpable similarities between “transubstantiation” and the Burkean-Ellisonian “consubstantiality” that we explored in Chapter 1, we can see how Baldwin’s critique of both the sentimentality (*pathos*) and the schematic argumentation (*logos*) of so many “protest novels” results in a kind of neo-Aristotelian rhetorical

⁴ It is worth mentioning that—as Douglas Field tells us—“Baldwin repeatedly referred to himself as a ‘witness,’ a term, as Gayle Pemberton has argued, which is ‘religious at its core’” (437).

⁵ It is worth noting that the concept of “*communitas*” has come up in discussions of *The Light People* and its ritual narrative as well. See Footnote 9.

practice in his own literary work, in which spiritual, ritualistic, and symbolic forms of communication (*ethos*) vastly outweigh the other two modes of persuasive expression. His dissatisfaction with “[s]entimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion,” is that it reveals an “aversion to experience,” a “fear of life,” and so it serves as a “signal of secret and violent inhumanity” (“Everybody’s” 14). While we might be able to imagine a *pathos*-based literature that resists exaggeration and does not come across as manipulative, Baldwin insists that the *modus operandi* of sentimentality is to dictate, rather than to share. This is what makes it somehow inhuman: its dictatorial form of *fabricating* a readerly experience, instead of *tapping into* the audience’s extant experience, intrinsically denies “a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment; freedom which cannot be *legislated*, fulfillment which cannot be *charted*” (“Everybody’s” 15, my emphases).

Baldwin is equally adamant that the “protest” aspect of such novels, when they become so dogmatic as to constitute argument *rather than* literature, treats the human being like “a deplorable conundrum to be explained by Science” instead of the “resolutely indefinable, unpredictable” creature that the human being is (“Everybody’s” 15). The *logos*-driven work of fiction, forgetting that “literature and sociology are not one in the same,” pretends that it is humans’ “*categorization* alone which is real and which cannot be transcended”; it therefore ignores “the niceties of style or characterization” and the complex “web of ambiguity, paradox, [...and] darkness” in which, vitally, humans can “find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves” (“Everybody’s” 23, 15, my emphasis). For Baldwin, then, categorization—which can beget, or emerge from, a too-narrow tribalism—is one of the greatest social plagues to be alleviated. The cure cannot be simply a rational retort, as the rational mode is just as much the problem as the content it happens to feature at any given moment. Nor can the antidote be a shot, an injection, of powerful feelings, which may offer a temporary “change of heart” but does little to maintain human connection. Accordingly, the cure is what Douglas Field calls “a developing notion of spirituality,” of “transcendence” that “occurs outside of religious worship” and that instead “is most likely to be found in the communion of friends and lovers” (438–39).⁶ It is a modern iteration of rhetorical *ethos*, which functions not through prescriptions but through pleas.⁷

In *Blues*, Richard’s father, Meridian Henry, is the local black reverend, whose loss leads him to question his Christianity. “I’ve been thinking,” Meridian tells Parnell James (the town’s newspaper editor and the only white citizen who seems to sympathize with Richard’s family and friends), “I’ve had to think—would I have *been* such a Christian if I hadn’t been born black? Maybe I *had* to become a Christian in order to have any dignity at all. Since I wasn’t a man in men’s eyes, then I could be a man in the eyes of God” (*Blues* 38, italics original). Christianity, Meridian suggests, was his path to being valued as a human being, physically within yet spiritually outside a society that denies the humanity of black people. Several other parts of the play corroborate this denial of humanity, including Lyle’s complaint of “so much fuss about a nigger—and a northern nigger at that,” another

⁶ Field is aware that “it is important not to confuse Baldwin’s emphasis on love with sentimentality, a feeling that he explicitly warns against,” and Mitchell suggests that “Baldwin’s theater theory obliterates ‘protective sentimentality’ by locating agency in the black actor” (Field 450, Mitchell 34). Furthermore, in a 1974 article, Abiodun Jeyifous wrote that “[r]ealism and ‘rituals’ dominate contemporary black theatre,” after quoting this argument by Alain Locke from the February 1926 issue of *Theatre Arts*: “The art of the Negro actor has had to struggle up out of the shambles of minstrelsy and make slow headway against very fixed limitations of popular taste. Farce, buffoonery, and pathos have until recently almost completely overlaid the folk comedy and folk tragedy of a dramatically endowed and circumstanced people. These gifts must be liberated” (Jeyifous 43, 38).

⁷ As Davis says, *Blues for Mister Charlie* “rejects the easy strategies of audience identification and stage-directed prescription that characterize most popular dramas of the American twentieth century,” seemingly making it less of “a didactic play” and more of a genuinely *appealing* one (in all senses of that term) (41–42).

white man's comparison of Richard to "an orang-outang out of the jungle," and the WHITETOWN chorus's jab at all black Americans: "*That's what they want us to integrate with*" (*Blues* 13, 50, 96, my emphasis). Nevertheless, Meridian concludes that Christianity has failed to humanize or save the lives of his loved ones. He tells Parnell that remaining devout "didn't protect my wife" or "my son," both of whom have been killed; it "hasn't changed this town—this town, where you couldn't find a white Christian at high noon on Sunday! The eyes of God—maybe those eyes are blind—I never let myself think of that before" (*Blues* 38). Upon Richard's death, the town's white chief of police saw "just a black boy that was dead"—not "a man that was dead, not my *son*" (*Blues* 39, italics original). If a devotion to God cannot succeed in upholding the humanity of black Americans, what can?

Crucially, Parnell plays the role of white *listener* in this scene, imploring Meridian to keep up some kind of hope even though they both know the "jury will never convict" Richard's murderer (*Blues* 43). Parnell does not fully understand or agree with everything Meridian says to him, but he does listen—something all the other white people in the town seem not to do. "I *do* know the Chief of Police better than you—because I'm white," Parnell admits. "And I can make him listen to me—because I'm white. [...] I know what we have done—and do. But you must have mercy on us. We have no other hope" (*Blues* 39–40, italics original). What Parnell acknowledges here is the major rhetorical disparity in Plaguetown: his whiteness allows him to be heard with seriousness by the police chief, whereas Meridian's blackness does not. Overcoming the racial listening gap, to be sure, would not itself solve the problems of white supremacy and black death in the society, but it would be a very useful first step. Meridian clearly understands the necessity of meeting this challenge, and so he concludes Act I by imploring Parnell to speak with another white man: his son's assassin. Meridian—not for his own good, but for the good of his friend—wants Parnell to ask Lyle if he killed Richard: "I don't care what the jury does. I know he won't say yes to them. He won't say yes to me. But he might say yes to you. [...] You're the only man who *can* find out." The act ends with the two men parting ways, the curtain coming down as Meridian cries to God that he wishes he—instead of his son—had died "for thee" (*Blues* 43).

If Meridian hopes God will hear him, Baldwin hopes the theatrical audience of *Blues* will do the same. It is no coincidence that the longest oration of the play comes from Meridian toward the very end of Act II, during Richard's funeral: at once the grieving father and the guiding preacher, Meridian speaks from the pulpit that very shortly will become the courtroom's witness stand. The speech he delivers is strikingly similar to Baldwin's prefatory notes to the play. "What a light, my Lord, is needed to conquer so mighty a darkness!" Meridian exclaims.

This darkness rules in us, and grows, in black and white alike. I have set my face against the darkness, I will not let it conquer me, even though it will, I know, one day destroy this body. But, my Lord, what of the children? What shall I tell the children? I must be with you, Lord, like Jacob, and wrestle with you until the light appears—I will not let you go until you give me a sign! A sign that in the terrible Sahara of our time a fountain may spring, the fountain of a true morality, and bring us closer, oh, my Lord, to that peace on earth desired by so few throughout so many ages. Let not our suffering endure forever. Teach us to trust the great gift of life and learn to love one another and dare to walk the earth like men. Amen. (*Blues* 77–78)

A great deal is happening in this passage, not the least of which is the theme of emergence—out of the darkness and into the light—that Baldwin says, in his notes for *Blues*, is the entire purpose of the play. Likewise, if Americans are unable to "liberate" the murderers of Emmett Till, the characters of *Blues* appear unable to liberate Richard Henry's killer, Lyle Britten. But "what of the children?" What will be the legacy of Richard's death, the celebration of his life, and the collective effort to prevent

yet another tragedy of this kind? Meridian's concern is less about the past and more about the future, and it has everything to do with rhetorical *ethos*. He wants to know what he should "tell" the youth of his community; he wants to experience spiritual *togetherness* (a being with, a being close to, a love) with God and with all his brothers and sisters; and he wants to witness a "sign" that "a true morality" is on the horizon. He may still be more properly religious than the James Baldwin of 1964, but both men share the profound desire for rhetorical connection not through the demonstration of facts or the elicitation of passions but, rather, through ethics, spirituality, and collective appreciation for "the great gift of life." That Act II comes to a close soon after this call from Meridian—with a young black woman named Juanita telling Parnell, just after the funeral ends, "One day, I'll recover. I'm sure that I'll recover. And I'll see the world again—the marvelous world. And I'll have learned from Richard—how to love. I must. I can't let him die for nothing"—creates an ambivalence for many of *Blues*'s characters and theatrical audience members: on the one hand, their crucial hope remains alive; on the other hand, they know that the trial to come will disappoint them.

Meridian's (and Juanita's) future-oriented rhetoric marks an important distinction from both the typical rhetoric of real-life courtrooms and the typical plotting of the literary "courtroom drama"; if trial discourse seeks to determine "what happened," and stories of murder tend to feature similar "whodunit" plots of mystery, *Blues for Mister Charlie* and its most conscious characters primarily attempt to dissect the conditions of the *present* and to pave the way for necessary change. As Davis explains, the play both "traces the junctures which lead" to Richard's "scandalous death" and—more urgently, I would say—"catalogues the personal and judicial responses to that death" (36). Indeed, as Mitchell puts it, *Blues* creates "a layered experience that never pretends that the present can be separated from the past" (47). In the courtroom itself, most of the characters reveal themselves not to care all that much about the "facts of the case"—the particular series of events that led Richard to "anger" Lyle and that led Lyle to kill Richard. Instead, these characters care much more about the lasting effects that Richard's death and the ensuing trial will have on the habits, the rituals, and the spirit of their Southern community.

While there are numerous similarities between a "real" courtroom trial and a Broadway play's courtroom scene, the latter does not have to adhere to the former's strict rules (about who can speak and when; about which remarks are admissible and which must be struck from the record; about lighting and sound and so forth). What *Blues* is able to do, then, is to blend forensic (or "legal") rhetoric with deliberative (or "political") rhetoric—and to include decidedly literary elements such as the Greek chorus, the flashback, and symbolic theatrical staging—in order to critique the legal apparatuses of the midcentury U.S. while heightening the spiritual matters of "communion," of salvation, and of the ways of life by which humans can practice freedom. In a 1971 essay on "Rhetorical Principles in Didactic Drama," Sam Smiley names Baldwin's *Blues* as a recent example of "persuasive drama" with an ethical mission—and he explicitly uses "the Aristotelian principles of rhetoric" to analyze the workings of this particular kind of playwriting, practiced also by Bertolt Brecht, George Bernard Shaw, and Clifford Odets (147). Smiley even mentions *ethos* specifically, though he thinks of *ethos* not so much in terms of spirit and ritual—but in the more conventional sense of the *dramatis personae*'s "personal character," whether "admirable and sympathetic" or "unsympathetic and evil" (148). Accordingly, in Smiley's view, the praise or indignation that the *dramatis personae*'s behavior and self-presentation elicit in the audience play a significant role in the drama's persuasiveness. While I largely agree with this claim, and I am very glad that Smiley has called attention to how Aristotelian rhetorical theory "can be useful in discerning the working principles of the didactic plays now frequenting the stages of the world" (151), I want to dig deeper into *ethos*'s spi/ritual qualities as they emerge in *Blues*. Smiley's unpacking of "forensic" and "political" rhetoric can help us get there.

In his application of Aristotelian rhetorical theory to didactic drama, Smiley reminds us of the particular temporalities that these two types of rhetoric—forensic and political—tend to inhabit. “Forensic, or legal, oratory attempts to accuse or defend for the sake of justice,” Smiley explains. “Didactic plays, too, sometimes deal with accusation and defense, or justice and injustice. These plays, like forensic speeches, look to the past for evidence and proof” (150). Is this how *Blues* works? There is no question that *Blues* is concerned with justice and injustice—with what is good, right, and ethical (those matters that we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4). It also deals with accusation and defense, presenting us with a lengthy trial scene in which attorneys, witnesses, and townspeople all at once accuse or defend certain other members of the community. *Blues* even looks to the past, in various ways, providing a sequence of events from which the theatrical audience (even better than the courtroom’s jury or judge) can make judgments about “what happened” between Richard and Lyle. However, during the play’s trial scene, the verbal rhetoric of the *dramatis personae* concerns the present and future much more than the past—and almost all of these characters, like the play on the whole, view “evidence and proof” (in the traditional sense) as largely irrelevant to the matters of accusation, defense, and justice. Some characters fabricate “evidence,” others willfully ignore the “real” evidence, and most appear to care about evidence *personally* but believe that, *pragmatically*, it will bear essentially no relation to the outcome of the trial or to the lasting habits, rituals, and spirit of “Plaguetown.”

Accordingly, the rhetoric that *Blues*’s characters express in the courtroom is often less forensic and more “deliberative.” As Smiley notes, “Political, or deliberative, oratory attempts to persuade an audience to do or not to do something; it is exhortation. Deliberative drama, like deliberative rhetoric, argues ways and means for future action; it deals with the expediency or in expediency of conduct” (150). While attorneys and others in any courtroom are often trying to persuade an audience—typically the jury—to do something, they are often quite limited (by the law itself) when it comes to the questions they can ask and the claims they can make. The focus of their rhetoric, at least in theory, should remain on the facts of the case and on the rules of law. Not only do *Blues*’s characters move beyond this focus to consider questions of what is “appropriate,” what is “right,” and what is in their own self-interest—as many lawyers, witnesses, and others often do in real courtrooms. *Blues*’s *dramatis personae* also speak in ways that would be totally disallowed or impossible in any “real” courtroom, and the emphasis of their verbal expressions remains squarely on “ways and means for future action”—on what kind of (habitual or ritualistic) “conduct” is *spiritually* deficient or spiritually rich, serving as a model of how or how not to behave and live in the years to come. These characters’ audience, too, is always wide yet communal. They are never speaking only to a witness on the stand, to the judge behind the bench, or to the jury in the box. Rather, they are always speaking to one another and to everyone physically present in the civic and communal space they are currently inhabiting, however segregated or partitioned it may be. This civic and communal space is at once the courtroom, the church out of which the courtroom is borne, and the theater where *Blues* is being performed. Even if the play’s rhetoric is not perfect by Baldwinian standards, its *ethos*-based focus on rituals and spirituality does allow the play to be “political” without too often being dogmatic: it regularly dwells in the complex “web of ambiguity, paradox, and darkness” that we need in order to understand ourselves “and the power that will free us from ourselves.”

Blues’s staging and dialogue give almost equal weight to the testimonies of the witnesses on the stand, the questions of the trial lawyers, and the commentary of the townspeople in the gallery. The gallery consists of WHITETOWN and BLACKTOWN, essentially two segregated Greek choruses that speak as (non-individuated) characters in the Jim Crow setting of the play. Interestingly, Whitetown and Blacktown regularly respond to the questions that the attorneys ask the witnesses, and there are also moments when a witness on the stand replies *to these choruses* in the

gallery, rather than to the lawyer doing the questioning. What results is a fascinating mix. On the one hand, the normative hierarchies of *legal decision-making* remain intact: a twelve-person jury reaches a verdict; a judge presides; Lyle's fate as "guilty" or "not," according to the criminal justice system, results from this verdict; and white subjects fare much better than do black subjects throughout this process. On the other hand, the normative hierarchies of *courtroom rhetoric* collapse almost entirely: the gallery can ask and answer questions aloud during the trial; a character like Richard, no longer alive, can reemerge in the courtroom, through flashbacks, to speak to us; and black and white subjects are on equal rhetorical footing. Finally, the play strongly separates *legal* decision-making from *communal*, *spiritual*, and *ethical* decision-making, placing Lyle's fate (and everyone else's fate) as "guilty" or "not" (in the spiritual and ethical, rather than in the legal, sense) in the hands of the whole theatrical audience.

The first witness called to the stand is Jo Britten, Lyle's wife. It is Richard's "tactless" faux-flirtations with Jo earlier in the play, and his emasculation of Lyle in her presence, that leads Lyle shortly thereafter to hunt down Richard and shoot him to death. As Jo provides her testimony, we see *Blues's* complex polyvocality in action:

THE STATE: Will you please tell us, in your own words, of your first meeting with the deceased, Richard Henry?
 WHITETOWN: Don't be afraid. Just tell the truth.
 BLACKTOWN: Here we go—down the river!
 JO: Well, I was in the store, sitting at the counter, and pretty soon this colored boy come in, loud, and talking in just the most awful way. I didn't recognize him, I just knew he wasn't one of our colored people. His language was something awful, awful! (*Blues* 83)

The segregated choruses' responses to the lawyer's questioning come before Jo's own answer, enabling *Blues's* audience to see the vastly divergent expectations that Plaguetown's white citizens and black citizens have of the trial process. In a real-life courtroom, any member of the "audience" would hear—and make judgments based on—only the verbal expressions of the examining attorney and the witness on the stand, but the distinctive literary structure of *Blues* forces the theatrical audience to reckon simultaneously with the verbal expressions (and divided beliefs) of the gallery. Both the white and the black townspeople care deeply about the trial and its outcome and, in fact, appear to make the same predictions. Whitetown is not "afraid," as Jo's version of "the truth" should help uphold the white supremacist social structure they are all used to. Blacktown *is* worried, for precisely the same reasons: the trial almost assuredly will reinforce the conditions of disfranchisement for the community's black subjects.

As *Blues* illuminates the partition of Plaguetown into Whitetown and Blacktown, providing a platform for the gallery to speak aloud, the structure of the "trial" undergoes a metamorphosis. It evolves from a conventional Southern-U.S. court case at midcentury—where a limited number of people in the room get to speak and to render a binding decision—to a literary courtroom scene, with elements of the avant-garde, in which nearly every person on stage gets to speak and the most important "judgments" are made by the members of the theatrical audience.

Jo's emphasis on Richard's "language"—on the "awful way" in which he was "talking" to her upon their first meeting—is significant for at least two reasons. First, it is by far the truest portion of her testimony: *Blues's* audience knows that Richard indeed *spoke* to Jo in a way that might be deemed "offensive," yet we also know that Richard never *physically touched* Jo, despite her claim, only a few moments later in the trial, that "he pushed himself up against me, real close and hard—and [...] he tried to kiss me" (*Blues* 84). Second, Jo's emphasis on verbal language here reminds us of

the centrality of rhetoric in any community's formation and sense of identity. It is Richard's words and tone that lead her to believe that "he wasn't one of our colored people," biased and inequitable as this belief may be. *Blues* is challenging its racially integrated theatrical audience to take on—to speak with—the "our" that Jo employs: first, the audience should dwell carefully on the meaning and effects of this "our" as Jo uses it, and then we should work to find a spiritual communion with one another—a much less segregated sense of communal identity that reconstructs the meaning and effects of the "our" uttered in our presence.

In his insightful 1985 essay "Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life," James Boyd White argues that (U.S.) legal rhetoric is best understood as something "literary" and artistic, as opposed to a "scientific" or even "logically rigorous" system of "rules" (684, 696). White's perspective on law, rhetoric, and literature in many ways aligns with Baldwin's (or with that of *Blues*'s implied author). More than anything else, White wants to direct our attention to "the spiritual or meaningful side of our collective life," "to the way in which our literature can be regarded as a literature of value and motive," and "to the way in which our [legal] enterprise is a radically ethical one, by which self and community are perpetually reconstituted" (698, 696). In emphasizing the spiritual, the meaningful, the ethical, the value- and motive-driven, and the communal, White—like *Blues* and like Aristotle—understands the *ethos* elements of rhetoric to be the most influential, especially in the specific contexts of law and literature. He wants us to see the possibilities of spiritual communion in the courtroom, together constructing and revising an "our" that illuminates the ethics and values that we all hold dear and through which we understand our collective identity.

At the same time, White's focus on *lawyerly* rhetoric—as opposed to the rhetoric of witnesses, of the gallery, and of more distinctly literary speakers and audiences—does not quite allow him to consider the heteroglossic and avant-garde elements, or the specific issues of racial segregation, that *Blues* places front and center. Still, let us look carefully for a moment at White's theory of "constitutive rhetoric"—the process by which "we constitute ourselves as individuals, as communities, and as cultures, whenever we speak"—since it is very much in line with the *ethos*-driven project that Baldwin and *Blues* themselves advance (690–91). "Every time one speaks as a lawyer," White explains,

one establishes for the moment a character—an ethical identity, or what the Greeks called an *ethos*—for oneself, for one's audience, and for those one talks about, and in addition one proposes a relation among the characters one defines. One creates, or proposes to create, a community of people, talking to and about each other. The lawyer's speech is thus always implicitly argumentative not only about the result—how should the case be decided?—and about the language—in what terms should it be defined and talked about?—but also about the rhetorical community of which one is at that moment a part. The lawyer is always establishing in performance a response to the questions, "What kind of community should we, who are talking the language of the law, establish with each other, with our clients, and with the rest of the world? What kind of conversation should the law constitute, should constitute the law?" (690)

In my own view, *ethos* is a *mode* of rhetorical expression and community—"constitution," including the means of expression just as much as it includes the result or the end. "Character" emerges in the speaker's expression itself—not merely in the image that an audience forms at the conclusion of the expression.

White is less cynical than Baldwin (or than the implied author of *Blues*) about real-life lawyers and courtrooms in the United States. Examining White's theory alongside Baldwin's play is so useful because the former regularly invokes the *ideal*—the *possibilities* for positive rhetorical community—whereas the latter regularly illuminates many of the lingering problems with U.S. legal rhetorics, while also providing a kind of literary alternative. Both White and *Blues* are committed to the question “What kind of community should we establish with each other, and with the rest of the world?,” though White remains particularly interested in how lawyers—those of us “who are talking the language of the law”—speak constitutively, while *Blues* shifts the focus more toward the theatrical, and toward a larger public sphere whose “rhetorical community” somewhat sidesteps legal language. While White shows us how the language of the law, at its best, can be quite spiritual and unifying, *Blues* shows us how the language of the law, at its worst, can be quite cold and oppressive, in need of replacement by a more literary language that moves us out of the darkness and into the light.⁸

In *Blues*'s courtroom, almost all of the white witnesses' and attorneys' verbal expressions are indeed “constitutive” of a rhetorical community, yet this community is essentially white-supremacist, anti-black, and exclusive of Blacktown's particular concerns. Jo's “our” never really merges with Blacktown's “our,” and her husband's attorneys consistently speak in a way that degrades Richard and African Americans more broadly. After Jo claims, under oath, that Richard had pushed himself against her and tried to kiss her—and that the reason she chose not to call the police is that she didn't want to make a fuss—the trial lawyer defending her husband responds, before the court: “Then you, as a responsible citizen of this town, were doing your best to keep down trouble? Even though you had been so brutally assaulted by a deranged northern Negro dope addict?” (*Blues* 84–85). These two sentences, short as they are, are packed with “constitutive” rhetoric that speciously alludes to high ethical principles while it in fact flouts the evidence and ostracizes the black citizens of Plaguetown through loaded epithets. In framing Jo as “a responsible citizen of this town,” Lyle's defense attorney attempts to highlight two components of *ethos* (the component of *ethics*, which we will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter 4, and the component of *location*, which we will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter 3).

On the opposite end of the “character” spectrum here is Richard, whose name the attorney never utters but who is presented as an unethical “assailant” and as a subject who does not belong in the community: he is “northern” (even though Richard was born and raised in Plaguetown), he is a “dope addict” (no longer true during his encounter with Jo), he is “deranged” (because he used crass and sexual language in her presence), and he is, finally, “Negro” (and black people should not be understood as “responsible citizens” in the Jim Crow South). Here, the rhetorical community that Lyle's defense attorney constitutes is deliberately divisive, segregated, racist: it is a community that embraces lies, that refuses to include black people as equal participants, and that ultimately undermines any kind of *spiritual* communion that might be forged in the courtroom.

We see the lack of community and communion between Plaguetown's white and black residents in the exchange that follows, in which Jo responds first to the prosecuting attorneys, who are representing Richard's family, and second to the Blacktown chorus in the gallery:

⁸ In this way, *Blues* largely corroborates what Beth Piatote has said about literature: it often “illuminates the web of social relations that law seeks to dismantle. [...] Literature challenges law by imagining other plots and other resolutions that at times are figured as nonresolution or states of suspension. The intertextual reading of law in literature also deepens one's understanding of aesthetics and form” (10).

COUNSEL FOR THE BEREAVED: Doesn't an attempt at sexual assault seem a rather strange thing to do, considering that your store is a public place, with people continually going in and out? [...]
 JO: Well, I told you the boy was crazy. He had to be crazy. Or he was on that dope.
 BLACKTOWN: You ever hear of a junkie trying to rape anybody?
 JO: *I didn't say rape!* (*Blues* 85, italics original)

As Jo doubles down on the narrative that Richard is “a deranged northern Negro dope addict,” Blacktown intervenes (and Jo replies) in a way that a real-life court of law would never allow. *Blues*'s audience, then, is able to witness Blacktown's perspective, in addition to the heightened racial tensions—the complete dearth of spi/ritual communion—in the room.

A few of the play's characters attempt to reverse course in the courtroom, employing rhetoric that emphasizes the spiritual, that works to eradicate racial segregation, and that envisions a future where Plaguetown, U.S.A., can be home to a community of (as Baldwin would say) “free” and “fulfilled” friends and neighbors. The clearest example is Papa D., the black “owner of a juke joint” where Richard and Lyle meet just before the shooting. On the witness stand, Papa D. answers Blacktown's questions (rather than any attorneys', as far as we can tell), and in the middle of his testimony Richard comes briefly back to life—the words he spoke during his final moments on earth, and the unique voice in which he uttered them, pervading the courtroom for all of *Blues*'s audience to hear. Concomitant with these temporal and spatial shifts, between the scene of the trial and the scene of the juke joint on the night Richard was killed, is a verbal rhetoric (voiced by Papa D.) that addresses multiple audiences and that oscillates between the past, the present, and the future. Papa D. testifies:

Mr. Lyle Britten—he is an *oppressor*. That is the only word for that man. He ain't never give the colored man no kind of chance. I have tried to reason with that man for *years*. I say, Mr. Lyle, look around you. Don't you see that most white folks have changed their way of thinking about us colored folks? I say, Mr. Lyle, we ain't slaves no more and white folks is ready to let us have our chance. Now, why don't you just come up to where *most* of your people are? and we can make the South a fine place for all of us to live in. That's what I say—and I tried to keep him from being so *hard* on the colored—because I sure do love my people. And I was the closest thing to Mr. Lyle, couldn't nobody else reason with him. But he was *hard*—hard and stubborn. He say, “My folks lived and died this way, and this is the way I'm going to live and die.” When he was like that couldn't do nothing with him. I know. I've known him since he was born. (*Blues* 87–88, italics original)

Repeating the idea that neither he nor anyone else could “reason with” Lyle, Papa D. highlights a failure of *logos* in persuasion and in structural change. If this testimony of Papa D.'s comes in response to a particular question that a trial attorney, or even Blacktown, has asked him, *Blues*'s audience has no way of knowing: up to this point in the trial scene, none of the play's characters directly questions him. It is also somewhat hard to imagine that a witness on the stand could speak at such length, and in such broad terms, in a real-life U.S. courtroom. What we get here, then, is a kind of rhetoric atypical of U.S. courtrooms—one that is especially deliberative (or “political”), attempting to persuade its diverse audience to embrace an integrated and spiritually unified South.

Quite beautifully, some speech patterns that are in fact quite *characteristic* of the U.S. South—especially the South's rural black communities—create an ambiguity and a layering effect that rhetorically accentuates the ethical and spiritual project that Papa D. hopes to advance. On the one

hand, we can interpret Papa D.'s "I say," "That's what I say," and "He say" as his particular Southern phrasing of what are in fact past-tense verbs ("I *said* to Lyle," "That's what I *told* Lyle," and "Lyle *replied*"). In that case, this testimony would be closer to the forensic, an account of what Papa D. told Lyle (and of how Lyle responded) in the past, leading up to Richard's murder. On the other hand, we can interpret Papa D.'s repetition of "say" as a present-tense construction, wherein he is directly addressing Lyle there in the courtroom: "Mr. Lyle, look around you *here and now*. Don't you see that most white folks have changed their way of thinking about us colored folks?" In that case, this testimony—directed at Lyle, at "Mr. Charlie," and at the whole audience of the courtroom and theater—would be a deliberative appeal for everyone present to work together to "make the South a fine place for all of us to live in." The "hard and stubborn" Lyle himself has never changed his beliefs and statements about racial segregation (he has been the same "*for years*," "since he was born"), so the tense of the verb here doesn't need to change either. It is precisely Lyle's declaration—that "My folks lived and died this way, and this is the way I'm going to live and die"—that Papa D. and *Blues* on the whole are challenging the audience to disidentify with. If the *ethos* that we express together continues to advance the segregation and white supremacy practiced by the generations before ours, we need (through our rhetoric) to reconstitute our community so that our values and our "way of life" advance fulfillment, freedom, and social equality.

As one might expect, these goals of fulfillment, freedom, and social equality are things that *Blues*'s white defense attorneys (eerily amalgamated as "The State") dissociate from the South and from "the precepts of the Christian church." When Richard's father, Reverend Meridian Henry, takes the stand, The State tells him, "You are not in the pulpit now" (even though, of course, the witness stand on the stage *was* the black church's pulpit only a few minutes ago) and surmises that "Perhaps the difficulties your son had in accepting the Christian faith is [*sic*] due to your use of the pulpit as a forum for irresponsible notions concerning social equality, Reverend Henry. Perhaps the failure of the son is due to the failure of the father" (*Blues* 102). In contrast, Meridian himself comes to believe, in line with *Blues*'s set design, that the courtroom's witness stand is just as important a venue for preacherly, spiritual, deliberative rhetoric as the church's pulpit is. After his verbal testimony becomes a bit crass and sarcastic, The State asks him, "And you are a minister?" Meridian's final words on the stand: "I think I may be beginning to become one" (*Blues* 105).

The only white witness who is not antagonistic to the Henry family is Parnell, the newspaper editor. Nevertheless, The State continues to paint Meridian as untrustworthy in its questioning of Parnell, while also coaxing the newspaper editor into statements about Richard's estrangement from "Southern" rituals and values. First, the white defense attorneys suggest that Parnell must "distrust" Meridian deep down, since they have never gone on a hunting trip together, despite the fact that they have been friends for many years: "Reverend Henry is also a southern boy," The State says to Parnell and the court; "he, also, I am sure, knows and loves this land, has gone swimming and fishing in her streams and rivers, and stalked game in her forests. And yet, close as you are, you have never allowed yourself to be alone with Reverend Henry when Reverend Henry had a gun. Doesn't this suggest some *lack*—in your vaunted friendship?" (*Blues* 110, italics original). Parnell calls this characterization "unwarranted and unworthy," but the damage has been done. The white defense attorneys' depiction of Southern habits and unspoken codes serves as the backdrop for a distortion of Parnell's respect for and friendship with his ministerial black neighbor.

This invocation of "Southernness" also lays the ground for The State's "character assassination," as it were, of the deceased Richard. In his testimony, Parnell calls Richard "very outspoken and perhaps tactless, but a very valuable person"; The State responds by asking Parnell to describe Richard's "effect on this town":

PARNELL: His effect was—kind of unsettling, I suppose. After all, he had lived in the North a long time, he wasn't used to—the way we do things down here.
 THE STATE: He was accustomed to the way things are done in the North—where he learned to carry arms, to take dope, and to couple with white women!
 PARNELL: I cannot testify to any of that, sir. I can only repeat that he reacted with great intensity to the racial situation in this town, and his effect on the town was, to that extent, unsettling. (*Blues* 111)

As before, the white defense attorneys advance a constitutive rhetoric that deliberately positions Richard as an outsider: they claim that the customs he adopted, up until his death, are distinctly “Northern,” even though essentially all the practices they mention—carrying a gun, going out with white women, even taking drugs—are things that a white man in the South could do without much worry. What The State reveals, then, is not “Southernness” per se but *racism*. Parnell’s own phrasing of “the way we do things down here” is like Lyle’s earlier “the way I’m going to live and die,” as recounted to us by Papa D. It is a way of life that Parnell comes to believe is *shameful*, rather than worthy of pride. What is “unsettling,” more than anything else, is the confrontation with midcentury racism (with “the racial situation in this town” or in essentially any U.S. town) that Richard, that this trial, and that the overall performance of *Blues* all force. Will we, the audience, be “unsettled”—whether in the courtroom or in the theater? Will we reflect on “the way we do things” and work to articulate an *ethos* that is freer, more equitable, and more fulfilling?

When the jury foreman announces a verdict of “not guilty” for Lyle, Blacktown “files out silently,” while Whitetown “files out jubilantly, and yet with a certain reluctance” (*Blues* 116). In many ways, Plaguetown’s racial segregation—its failure to administer justice to its black citizens—remains. But this “certain reluctance” in the white townspeople at least hints at the possibility for change. They do not feel spiritually fulfilled at this moment, and to some degree they realize that the way they live and the way they might die is ethically deficient and less “free” than it could be. More than any of the other white townspeople, Parnell understands the severity of this problem and takes steps to improve it. Nearly all the black townspeople gather together after the trial to sing, pray, and (most of all) march. This gathering and practice is deeply spiritual, a ritual that brings together friends and neighbors and kin in communion, a political act rooted in *ethos*. The white newspaper editor asks if he can participate:

PARNELL: Can I join you on the march, Juanita? Can I walk with you?
 JUANITA: Well, we can walk in the same direction, Parnell. Come. Don't look like that. Let's go on on.
 (*Exits.*)
 (*After a moment, Parnell follows.*)
 Curtain
 THE END (*Blues* 121)

While Parnell might not yet be decidedly consubstantial with Juanita or with his other black neighbors in Plaguetown, he takes a first step (even if he is a bit behind) in this “direction” of spiritual togetherness. *Blues* asks all of its audience members if we are capable of doing the same. If the language of the law and the space of the courtroom in the midcentury rural South are not quite able to produce an ethical and fulfilling outcome, perhaps the language and the space of the theater can do so in their stead. We, the literary and theatrical audience, become witnesses of our own—witnesses to the deficient practices and structures of a white supremacist U.S. legal system and social

apparatus. What will we say and do in response? What will our constitutive rhetoric, our expression of *ethos*, look like?

Gordon Henry, Jr.'s *The Light People* (1994)

Baldwin (or the implied author of *Blues*) is right to be pessimistic about the possibilities of legal discourse and witness testimony to lead to justice for African American subjects at midcentury. Nevertheless, there are cases where the courtroom trial process does indeed lead to justice for minority subjects—and there are even more opportunities within *literary expression* for such a process of justice to be realized. The 1994 multi-genre book *The Light People*, written by Ojibwa author Gordon Henry, Jr., features a central courtroom scene that serves as a valuable example. Organized largely in theatrical form (with little narration other than occasional, stage-direction–style notes between the speeches of the different characters), the scene dramatizes a case wherein an Ojibwa family sues a Minneapolis museum for the rights to an ancestor's severed leg and moccasin, both of which are on display for the museum's visitors. After a series of arguments about property rights, anatomy, and the social value of museums, the presiding judge sides with the Ojibwa plaintiffs precisely because their testimonies are persuasive—persuasive, I believe, because of the strong *ethos* they display.

The drama begins when Oshawa, “a young man of an urban reservation,” goes on a “cultural-exchange” field trip to the natural history museum and sees the leg, dressed in a moccasin with a floral pattern, preserved in dry ice and accompanied by an informational plaque. The book's narrator explains, in a voice focalized through Oshawa:

What seems to have vanished forever often reappears at the strangest moments: sometimes among dioramas of stuffed buffalo, stalked by synthetic, spear-wielding hunters covered with actual wolf skins, sometimes among fictional river villages among imaginative reconstructions of mound builders, catalogued in curio stasis, as if the vanished were never meant to exist in a moment beyond the fictional situation, but were instead left to struggle with another simulated reconstruction, as invisible victims of the interpretation of artifact. (Henry 120)

Immediately, the narrative wrestles with the charged dichotomies of *vanished/present* and *actual/fictional*, suggesting that efforts to eliminate bodies and cultures are often thwarted by the work of representation, while the work of representation—of fiction—itself can do material damage to real people. If “dioramas,” “imaginative reconstructions,” and “synthetic” statues emerge, in museums, out of a faulty perception that indigenous cultures have been destroyed wholesale—and thus can be reduced to “mere objects of study” (Brill de Ramírez 1–2)—the presence of live indigenous people in museums of this kind, and a Native literary treatment of such museumification, can disrupt the neocolonial narrative and correct the historical record. Early in his book *Blood Narrative*, Chadwick Allen recalls a concert he attended, where a group of Maori students at once encountered and altered an appropriated aesthetic representation of their culture: “The active presence of the Maori school group disrupted the ‘museumification’ of Maori culture for tourist consumption, and it revealed the text of the staged concert as a potential force for galvanizing the younger generation's sense of its Maoritanga (Maori identity). Strikingly, this shift in the concert's interpretive ideological frame occurred not covertly but openly, literally over the heads of the tourist audience” (14). Oshawa's presence in the Minneapolis museum seems to be doing something similar, while Henry's larger literary treatment counters one kind of (damaging) fiction with another (reparative) kind.

Reminded, by this leg on display, of a story his uncle once told him, Oshawa returns home and tells his uncle and their family friend, Willow Four Bears, all about the moccasin-dressed limb. The leg had belonged to Willow's father, and the Four Bears family had asked Oshawa's uncle—Oshawanung—to bury it. Everything about Oshawa's description matches Willow's memory. "Enough people know what the leg looked like, at least four who are still living," Willow tells Oshawa and Oshawanung. "Between those people we should have enough grounds to have the leg returned and reburied, according to my father's original intentions. How could those people argue such a case? Some white man must have dug up that leg, somehow. I don't know, but I do know it is not right for those people to have that leg" (Henry 123). Here, Willow speaks in terms of "right" and "wrong" both within and tangential to a U.S. legal framework: she refers to "grounds" and a civil court "case," while also evidently asserting that "it is not right"—in the system of values by which she and her family live—for the museum to claim her father's leg as their own. After garnering the support of the tribal council and the tribal attorney, the latter issues a letter on behalf of the Four Bears family to the museum, whose officials "responded civilly but curtly with, in essence, a series of statements that questioned the memory of the Four Bears family and asserted various theories on the nature of ownership" (Henry 124). Debates over ownership, belonging, and property are now in order, and the Four Bears family soon meets the museum in court.

Interestingly, in describing the counsel for each side and the judge hearing the case, the narrative sets up an expectation that the Four Bears family will have a difficult time winning their suit. "In light of the tribal attorney's inexperience in matters other than gaming laws and post-Reorganization Act politics," the narrator explains,

the tribe and a few upper-middle-class advocates for Indian rights procured an East Coast lawyer named Catullus Cage, a high-priced radical known for fearless legal circumambulations and avant-garde courtroom antics. For their part, the museum employed an Ottawa Vietnam veteran named Tony Nugush, who had lost an arm to a human Viet Cong mine [...] and then graduated to a practice in Washington, D.C., to a firm he never lost a case for. The case was heard before Minerva Salazar, a Hispanic judge recently appointed to the bench by a Republican president who liked her record on affirmative action. (Henry 125)

Facing a military-veteran lawyer who has lost a limb of his own—and a Republican-appointed judge who soon tells both attorneys, "I will not tolerate convoluted cultural banter in the course of this case. Both of you are experienced enough to know that I will decide this case on the legal issues involved" (Henry 126–27)—does the Four Bears family stand a chance?

Despite what the veteran Nugush says in his opening argument about how "this case should not, must not, be decided on cultural meanderings of individual memory, but on legal issues of ownership, on evidence, on the laws of the nation under which this courtroom serves," both he and his opponent, the radical Cage, attempt to demonstrate the good character of their own clients while painting the other side as testy, dishonest, or depraved. As Willow answers her own attorney's questions, she consistently testifies to the integrity of her now-deceased parents, giving them credit for her own integrity today. She says of her father, "When he came back from a hunt with food, he'd share with the elderly people of the village. That's the way he was. He always treated my mother well, and he taught us to be respectful. He also taught us to be strong through hard times. There was a deep faith in my father that I carry with me to this day" (Henry 130–31). Willow also brings to court the matching moccasin for her father's other foot, which Cage proves to be exactly the same in design, color, and size as the shoe on the foot of the leg from the museum. Importantly, integrity and "character" here are a matter of *ethos* not only in the sense of *ethics* and *goodness* but also in the

sense of *ritual* and *spirit*. The leg of Willow's father is dressed the way it is—and was supposed to be buried in a particular way—according to the spiritual and ceremonial values of his family and of the Ojibwa people more largely. What is at stake in this court case, for the Four Bears family, is not so much the issue of “property”—who has the right to *possess* the leg?—but more so the issue of “propriety”: is the leg being treated, positioned, and cared for in ways that are “respectful” and in line with the “deep faith” and traditions of its now-deceased bearer and his culture? The death of the body does not at all spell the death of the spirit, and the spirit of Willow's father lives in the present, through the ceremonially-dressed leg, just as his “deep faith” lives in Willow “to this day.” His hunting, his sharing with the elderly people of his village, his treatment of his wife, and his teaching of his children all constitute ritual practices embedded with—and generative of—a spirit that the natural history museum, its curators, and its advisors do not respect.

As David Stirrup has pointed out, *The Light People* on the whole communicates to its readers in a way that emphasizes the spiritual, the ritualistic, and the communal—what I will call the *ethos*-driven—just as the testimonies of the Ojibwa witnesses do in its central courtroom scene. Following Paula Gunn Allen, Stirrup understands *The Light People* as “a ritual narrative” that “is non-linear, accretive, achronistic, and non-rationalist”: it employs a “circular structure” of “personal histories, mythological, spiritual, and supernatural occurrences, and geographically and relationally defined community” (141, 154–55). Just as Willow's testimony does not strongly separate the past (during which her father was bodily alive) from the present (during which her father remains spiritually alive—in the preserved leg, in Willow herself, and in the stories and rituals of their community), *The Light People* on the whole presents narrative not through linearity but through what Henry himself has called “sacred concentricity” (Blaeser, “Like ‘Reeds’” 558, qtd. in Stirrup 155).⁹ Like Papa D. in *Blues*, Willow uses the witness stand as a venue for rhetoric that cuts across generations and temporalities, always remaining “constitutive” in a way that represents the values she and her community hold dear.

In cross-examination, Nugush pounces on Willow's atypical-of-the-courtroom approach, returning to a more conventional forensic rhetoric (rooted in the past) and attempting to malign the character of both Willow and her father. First, Nugush tells the court that Willow's father “was drunk at the time he came into the hospital” with leg pain. Willow's attorney, Cage, then “*rises violently from his chair*” and shouts: “Objection! Whether Moses Four Bears was drunk or not has no bearing on the evidence the witness has given identifying the leg as her father's.” Nugush replies, “Willow Four Bears was a young woman at the time her father lost his leg. The details of her testimony identifying her father's leg must be couched in her ability to remember and verify circumstances surrounding the removal of her father's leg. I'm attempting to show that Mrs. Four Bears may be refusing to acknowledge certain circumstances about how and why her father's leg was removed. These details may in fact relate to her reliability as a witness” (Henry 133–34). While Nugush claims to be exclusively interested in the facts of the case, Cage's objection comes from his understanding that his opponent's primary motive is to paint Willow's father as a drunkard and Willow herself as a liar. It is the Four Bears family's character, a version of their *ethos*—as opposed to their health or their memory—that Nugush hopes to dispute.

⁹ Recalling E. Patrick Johnson's interest in Victor Turner's theory of “*communitas*,” which we explored for a moment above, Stirrup also points out that *The Light People*'s concentric and circular narrative “offers veritable *communitas*” not only to the characters who speak in the book but also to the book's readers, who at any moment “can interact and interpret” in spiritually meaningful ways (157). On ritual narrative in Native American literature, see Paula Gunn Allen (pp. 3–17).

After Willow calmly answers, “I’ve heard it said that my father had been drinking, but I was told by my mother that they removed his leg at the hospital because he had diabetes,” Nugush tries again to besmirch her honor. The new line of questioning produces this exchange:

Nugush: So it is possible that the clothing you claim to recognize could be covering another man’s leg?

Willow: I don’t see that as a possibility.

Nugush: I don’t know, maybe Arnold Oshawanung never buried the leg, or maybe he stripped it of its clothing. Or maybe the museum staff put the articles you claim to recognize on another leg.

Willow: Maybe it’s your leg there in the box.

Nugush (*to Salazar*): I have no further questions, your Honor. (Henry 134, 137)

Nugush believes his work is done as soon as he gets a sarcastic response from Willow. What he fails to understand is that this exchange might ultimately be less effective at exposing weak *ethos* on Willow’s part and more effective at revealing the weak *ethos* of Nugush himself. While Willow, as a witness on the stand, is not allowed to ask questions of her own, she nonetheless can *answer* in a way that highlights the absurdity of the question she has just been asked. As Lee Schwenger has noted, *The Light People*’s courtroom scene “presents a somewhat absurd and darkly humorous situation to make a pointed and serious critique of museum culture”; in “collecting human remains and associated funerary objects” for display on a wall, the museum removes these spiritually significant materials from their “tribal and cultural context” in a way that can be deeply “dehumanizing” (185, 187). To a certain degree, any reader of Henry’s book is a kind of judge in this case: Judge Salazar’s speaking role is quite minor until the end of this courtroom scene, and the narrative invites its readers to hear the testimonies of those on the stand, to piece together the arc of events that led from the leg’s removal at the hospital to the lawsuit at present, and to make a decision regarding who should have the rights to the leg from this point forward. What will we, the readers, conclude? Will we agree with Salazar, the “actual” judge hearing this case?

The defendants’ two witnesses are Adam Post, the museum’s head curator, and Cody Williams, an anthropology professor at Brigham Young University who came across the dressed and preserved leg while doing fieldwork for his “dissertation on the Ojibwa as a river culture” (Henry 151). In their testimonies, both of these men herald the supremacy of their scientific methods and argue that “the public” will be best served if Moses Four Bears’ leg remains in the museum. Post explains, “In the case of the Ojibwa leg, we felt that we had an artifact that was undeniably authentic and representative of Ojibwa people. The leg gave us the unusual opportunity to show a one-of-a-kind artifact, an actual leg, the leg of a person who existed at one time in an Ojibwa community. This was one case in which we displayed more than a model; in other words, the object was not a model, the model was an object” (Henry 146). Post’s language, especially in this last sentence, is humorously chiasmic, tautological, and abstruse—one of many instances of the particular brand of satire that pervades *The Light People*. As Kimberly Blaeser explains, this moment in the courtroom “manages to subtly undercut the practice and the character of the curator, to challenge the philosophical underpinnings of the ‘museumization’ of culture, and to belittle the very language used: what [Gerald] Vizenor calls the ‘manifest manners’ of dominance” (“Writing Voices” 61). Yet again, we the readers are hailed to evaluate the *ethos* of a witness, as well as of the dominant institutions that witness represents. Cage’s lawyerly questions, too, challenge Post’s emphasis on empiricism and representativeness, apparently drawing both a disciplinary and a spiritual-ethical distinction between science/the sciences and humanity/the humanities: “What of humanity, of imaginative interaction between humans and their worlds?” he asks. “What of the meaning of the leg

to the people who knew the person who walked, ran, and lost that leg? Has your science brought us to this? Where is your humanity?” (Henry 148). Judge Salazar briefly interjects to say Cage has gone too far, and the latter ends his questioning of the curator there.

In a similar vein, though, Cage works to portray the anthropology professor as a narcissistic opportunist. When Williams tells the court of his “discovery” of the leg, he admits to placing a monetary value on the limb and to his trading it for professional advancement: “the museum offered to buy the leg from me for one thousand dollars. Though I suspected the price might be low, I assented with the understanding that I would be given full credit for the discovery of the leg in all museum literature for time immemorial” (Henry 155). Cage concludes his questioning of the professor by pouncing on these earlier admissions: “I bet you saw an opportunity in the leg,” Cage remarks, “a chance to capture something unique, a one-of-a-kind find that would forever connect your name with an authentic artifact.” After Williams retorts, “How dare you make such assumptions—,” Cage cuts him off and says, “Forgive me for my assumptions, Mr. Williams. If the museum should return the leg for reburial, perhaps the Four Bears’ family and Mr. Oshawanung can forgive you for yours. I have no further questions, your Honor” (Henry 156–57). Cage’s so-called “assumptions” prove to be realities, as Williams already has confessed to his bargaining for personal gain. On the other hand, the professor’s and the museum’s “assumptions” about the leg, the Four Bears family, and the Ojibwa people more generally all prove to be lacking. As Maureen Salzer puts it, the anthropologist and curator “are rightfully laughed out of court, their needs to collect, display, and own artifacts and body parts shown to be irresponsible and self-aggrandizing” (45–46).

While “legal issues”—which Judge Salazar said, at the beginning of the hearing, would be the sole basis for her ruling—are often quite distinct from spiritual and ethical matters, they occasionally can and do overlap. As the hearing comes to a close, Judge Salazar explains her decision:

After hearing the testimony and following the flow of arguments of counsel on both sides, I must side with the Four Bears family. In my mind, the testimony of Mrs. Four Bears and Mr. Oshawanung was convincing. And I saw no motive for them to desire the return of a leg that had no connection to their personal history as tribal people. The testimony of the museum curator and Dr. Williams, on the other hand, provided no real motive for displaying the leg or possessing the leg. (Henry 160)

As a last resort, Nugush and the museum make a ridiculous request to have the court order an exhumation of Moses Four Bears’ body—to see if it “matches” the moccasin-covered leg—but Judge Salazar’s final words bring the courtroom scene to a close: “I believe most of us are sure about the identity of the leg. Exhumation won’t be necessary. My decision stands” (Henry 161). The exhumation request is merely the last (and most egregious) of many museumification practices in *The Light People* that Salzer and Schwenger would call “laughable” and “absurd.” We can understand it as the epitome of a settler-colonial philosophy that privileges the “scientific,” the “logical,” or the *logos*-driven to such an extreme that it completely negates the spiritual, the ethical, or the *ethos*-driven in our collective culture. Luckily for the Four Bears Family, Judge Salazar makes her judgment—becomes “sure about” the leg and its history—based on a practice of listening that attends to communal, ritualistic, and value-driven concerns.

Despite the narrative setup and a wide array of historical and legal precedents that might lead readers of *The Light People* to expect a different decision in this case, the Ojibwa plaintiffs prevail through persuasive, *ethos*-based testimony. In contrast, the curator’s and anthropologist’s testimonies fail to connect their personal desire and “scientific” inclinations to any kind of strong legal defense. We—the readers of Henry’s book, and members of the courtroom’s larger audience (discursively, if not physically, present)—are invited to make judgments and render decisions of our own in the

ongoing debates over ownership and community. If the tussle between *logos* and *pathos*—or logic and affect, or reason and sentiment—has resulted in political and social structures that discount, devalue, and do damage to indigenous Americans, there might just be a third mode that can be reworked and rearticulated to generate effective resistance. As Blaeser tells us, many “Native literatures have supra-literary intentions. They want to come off the page and affect life. [...] They work to make us into communities, form our identity, ensure our survival. Native authors, like authors of many postcolonial cultures, write revolution; their ‘tongue is fire.’” (65). With their multi-temporal and concentric narratives centered on spi/rituality, Henry’s book and its indigenous courtroom witnesses steep us in a life of communion. Like *Blues* and Papa D., they ask us to hear and, ultimately, to practice a complex constitutive rhetoric that makes us, indeed, “The Light People.” We need not be stuck in the “darkness” forever more.

Chapter 3
Ethos as Com-position:
Gloria Anzaldúa's Locational Rhetoric of *Nos/otras*

Introduction

We have seen already in this dissertation how *ethos* can be conceived as a rhetoric of “consubstantiality,” of “an accord of sensibilities” (in Kenneth Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives* and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*), as well as a rhetoric of spi/rituality (in James Baldwin’s *Blues for Mister Charlie* and in Gordon Henry, Jr.’s *The Light People*). In the preceding chapters, the matter of *location* has seeped into the discussion (with the Invisible Man’s finally “being home,” for instance, or with the debate in *The Light People* over the proper resting place for Moses Four Bears’ severed leg and ceremonial moccasin). This third chapter, focusing on Gloria Anzaldúa’s 1987 book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (in connection with other, later parts of her oeuvre), centers *location* as the primary rhetorical function of *ethos*—the function that separates *ethos* from modes of persuasion through rationality (*logos*) or sentimentality (*pathos*).

Anzaldúa’s conceptions of the borderlands, of *mestizaje*, of *nepantla*, and especially of “*nos/otras*” provide a theory and a practice of rhetorical *ethos* that is consistently location-driven (in addition to being consubstantial, spiritual, ethical, and so on). Importantly, the *ethos*-based rhetoric of *nos/otras* in *Borderlands* works to engage, persuade, and forge identifications with readers in a way that is not especially rational or linear, nor primarily sentimental or affective, but chiefly locational and symbolic. Furthermore, contrary to what several readers of Anzaldúa’s work have suggested, the complex rhetoric of *Borderlands* is not so much rooted in a “standpoint,” an “essence,” or result-oriented “identity politics” but, rather, is rooted in and routed through “confluence,” linguistic constructions, and process-oriented identifications. Finally, the *ethos*-based rhetoric of *nos/otras* begins to move us away from conceptions of location that are grounded in “property,” ownership, or stable physical habitats, moving us instead toward conceptions of location that are grounded in “propriety,” attitude, and dynamic spiritual-linguistic habits and habitats. Accordingly, *nos/otras* is a kind of “com-position,” wherein “what we are composed of” biologically, constitutionally, and environmentally (as in the phrase “our physical compositions”) is not the location we should strive to maintain or to inhabit unendingly; rather, it is the *point of departure* for “how and what we compose” linguistically, ethically, and environmentally (as in the phrase “our literary compositions”). With this com(-)positional shift from static property to dynamic propriety, Anzaldúa’s speaker in *Borderlands* ultimately provides a sophisticated critique of what we now call “cultural appropriation.”

In the first two sections of this chapter, I provide a brief sketch of the rich tradition, within both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory, of conceptualizing *ethos* as a location-driven mode of communication and persuasion. Interestingly, a renewed scholarly interest in *ethos*—promoted by feminist rhetoricians in particular—emerged soon after Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* was first published, a time (between the late 1980s and the late 2000s) when standpoint theory, the “postpositivist realist theory of identity,” and new theories of “essence” also began to gain steam (in feminist philosophy, Chicana/Latina literary studies, and queer of color studies alike) as critiques both of conservative positivism and of postmodernist deconstruction. These largely late-twentieth-century (re)turns to *ethos* and to “essence,” I will show, are intertwined, even as the Anzaldúan version of *ethos* in *Borderlands* promotes and performs a contrasting philosophy of rhetoric. While the late 2000s and early 2010s saw fewer published articles or books on rhetorical (especially locational) *ethos*, the last four years have seen yet *another* renewal of interest in the concept. However, these recent perspectives often also insist on *ethos* being tied to “essences,” and they occasionally suggest that affect and emotions are an integral part of *ethos* as a mode of communication and persuasion.

In the chapter's third section, I trace how scholars in rhetoric and composition studies have responded to Anzaldúa's writings (in a few cases even aligning various parts of her oeuvre with the concept of *ethos*); these perspectives frequently account for the complex ways in which Anzaldúa's rhetorical theory engages with location, yet they also stop short of unpacking the particularly *literary* and *poetic* elements of works like *Borderlands*. The tendency—not only by rhetoric and composition scholars, but by the vast majority of scholars who have published articles and monographs on *Borderlands*—to focus almost exclusively on its prose passages becomes all the more disconcerting when we remember that *Borderlands* was first conceived as a book *entirely* of poems.¹

The remainder of the chapter, then, examines the development of the *ethos*-based rhetoric of *nos/otras*—primarily as it emerges within the text of *Borderlands*, but also as it appears in various other writings (both published and unpublished) in Anzaldúa's oeuvre. Several scholars have suggested that Anzaldúa's writings of the mid- to late-1990s and the early 2000s—with their emphasis on constructivism, in-between spaces, spiritual politics, and non-possessive efforts to forge identifications with others—mark a significant shift from her writings of the 1980s (including *Borderlands*), which they believe are invested in “identity politics” and in possessive claims to space and authority. Through close-readings of both *Borderlands* and Anzaldúa's later writings, I hope to show that the theories she advanced in the final years of her life were not really attempts to change or depart from the aesthetics and politics of *Borderlands* but, rather, were efforts to *clarify* the complex rhetorical work *Borderlands* had been doing all along. That book's continued canonization and relevancy is both a testament to the power of the *nos/otras* rhetoric it exemplifies and a reality that demands that we correctly understand its project: *Borderlands* offers a queer-of-color theory and practice of *ethos* that shifts us away from essentialism, “identity,” and “owned” locations, advocating instead for a non-proprietary *dwelling* in multiple, shifting locations and for the construction of *identifications* through language. Of course, what this means is that the Anzaldúan conception of *ethos* is decidedly literary: we must pay careful attention to the poems, the short stories, the historical vignettes, the *corridos*, and the (spi)ritual *ofrendas* of *Borderlands*—in addition to its more conventionally “theoretical” prose passages—to understand both the explanations and the examples of *ethos* that Anzaldúa and her literary speakers provide.

***Ethos* as Location**

Since the end of World War II (and especially in the 1990s and 2000s), philosophers of rhetoric have illuminated the close connections between two Ancient Greek terms, both of which tend to be translated into English as “ethos.” With *eta* as its first letter, *ethos* (ἦθος) means “habit,” “custom,” or (most commonly) “character”; with *epsilon* as its first letter, *ethos* (ἔθος) means “habitat,” “accustomed place,” or “dwelling.” In his 1947 “Letter on Humanism,” Martin Heidegger wrote that (even with the macron over the *e*) “*Ēthos* means abode, dwelling place,” “sphere of the familiar” (233, 234). As a result, he claimed, we should understand the related term “ethics” to mean *that which* “ponders the abode of man” (Heidegger 234–35). In this same year, William M. Sattler wrote of *ethos*'s “complex and somewhat fluid, or at least changing, denotation” in Ancient Greece, before settling on “totality of characteristic traits” (the *character* of a speaker; that which is *characteristic* of a place or community; etc.) as a comprehensive definition of the term (55). Accordingly, while

¹ In a July 30, 1985, letter to Ann Russo and Patricia Cramer, Anzaldúa wrote: “I’m in the midst of finishing a book of poems called *Borderlands*. Yep, it grew out of one of the poems I read at Common Differences [a conference held at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign from April 9–13, 1983]. Well, it’s a monster now and the extended preface/process essay is part of [the] ‘Atravezando Fronteras’ essay. It’s all coming together but it takes its sweet own time” (Anzaldúa, Letter to Ann Russo).

one critic has suggested that rhetorical scholars “would do well to transliterate ἦθος precisely as ēthos” (with the macron), “so as to distinguish it from εἶθος, ethos” (Corts 202), there has been a general consensus for decades that these two Greek terms “are consubstantial with each other, creating a rationale for combining discussions of character, habit, and abode, thus highlighting the social, constructed, ethical, and agentive aspects” of *ethos* in ancient and modern contexts alike (Ryan et al. 6).²

The similarity between the English words “habit” and “habitat” correlates precisely to the similarity between the *familiar* (that with which we identify) and the *familial* (those with whom we identify) to illustrate the powerful relationship between character and location (or between a spiritual “dwelling on” and a physical “dwelling in”). Indeed, we see this same crucial relationship in so many other pairs of English words: civil/civic, polite/political, urbane/urban, propriety/property, and so on. To communicate in a way that foregrounds shared habits and cultural practices, or shared habitats and dwelling places—even amid our other differences—is to make convincing use of rhetorical *ethos* without necessarily resorting to the kinds of logical and sentimental appeals that, for minority speakers in particular, are often ineffective or disallowed.

In 2016, Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones published a fascinating edited collection—*Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*—that emphasizes the locational qualities of *ethos*, arguing that “women’s ethos construction can be read as ecological thinking” “a way of living in the world oriented toward cohabitation”; this mode of thinking and living “acknowledges the dynamic construction of relationships within and across locations and people as constituting knowledge and values” (2, 11). I very much agree with these feminist rhetoricians’ understanding of *ethos* as an orientation toward “cohabitation”—whether physical, spiritual, or cultural. At the same time, however, they appear to understand *ethos* as a countable noun—a possession or an identity of a given speaker—whereas I (following Burke’s “consubstantiality,” Ellison’s “accord,” Baldwin’s “love,” Anzaldúa’s “*nos/otras*,” and even Aristotle’s ancient formulation of *ethos* in Book I of the *Rhetoric*) understand *ethos* instead as a more amorphous, shifting, and largely undefinable *mode* of expression and identification that a speaker may *activate* but can never own.

Somewhat like Michel Foucault’s conception of “power,” rhetorical *ethos* in my view is “character” that cannot be counted, expanded or diminished, held or possessed, or labeled with a named identity; rather, it circulates throughout the global social body (in “capillary” fashion), has different resonances in different spaces and interpretive communities, can be shifted and mobilized and illuminated by various speakers, can just as easily be ignored or misinterpreted or missed, and is first and foremost a function of language.³ So, while it is certainly true that marginalized and minority speakers face more and higher hurdles when they work to mobilize *ethos* with large and diverse audiences, it is not entirely the case—as Ryan, Myers, and Jones suggest—that “women (and other marginalized groups)” often possess an *ethos* (or multiple, distinct, plural *ethè*) “not recognized as worthy of public participation” (6–7). As an uncountable, linguistic mode of expression—a function of communication—*ethos* by definition requires a community of interlocutors; it thus cannot exist in private, nor can it itself *be* a barrier to public participation. Ryan, Myers, and Jones write that “[c]ommon, normalizing ethē (i.e., Mormon woman, mother, angel of the house, whore, bitch) ascribed to women do not lend themselves readily to public speaking. As such, new ethē must

² Other illuminating commentaries on the relationship between rhetorical *ethos* (consistently understood as the “character” of a speaker) and *location* or “dwelling place” (concepts that are not always a central part of discussions of *ethos*) include Chamberlain, Christoph, Eden (especially Chapter 1), Halloran, Holiday, Hyde, Miller, Reynolds, Schmertz, C. Smith, and Sullivan.

³ For an elaboration of the concept of capillary power, see Foucault (especially p. 39).

be created and defined to push against these socially determined *ethē*” (2). If we understand *ethos* this way—as countable, pluralized, contrivable, existing with a variety of distinct and ascribed identity labels—then it is indeed an obstacle for many speakers hoping to be heard in one or more public spheres.⁴ But when we understand *ethos* (the way Anzaldúa, we will see, understands “*nos/otras*”) as amorphous, shifting, irreducible to identity labels, non-possessive, and yet illuminable, its rhetorical power—especially for marginalized speakers—becomes all the more apparent.

Ryan, Myers, and Jones also argue that “typical definitions of *ethos* do not presume difference, the shared yet diverse oppression of women, or contemporary theorizing about the subject as starting points for constructing *ethos*” (5). While a number of classical and modern discussions of *ethos* indeed presume a context of an individual (Western, white, straight, upper-class, without-disabilities) man speaking with other men—and the vital recent work of feminist rhetoricians, as well as my own work in this dissertation, seeks to highlight the many textures and complexities of *ethos* that make it quite a generative concept for marginalized and minority speakers—it is also not entirely true that mainstream or classical definitions of *ethos* “do not presume difference” as a starting point for its activation by a speaker. As Burke explains in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and as we saw in Chapter 1, an *ethos*-based rhetoric of “consubstantiality” and “identification” exists and holds importance “precisely because there is division”; if speakers “were not apart from one another, there would be no need of the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (22). Even Aristotle’s explanation that *ethos* is especially important “in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt”—coupled with his insistence that *ethos* results “from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person”—suggests that differences in knowledge or opinion are essential to the persuasive contexts within which *ethos* operates, while any *preexisting* (or pre-linguistic) sense of sameness or allegiance between the speaker and the audience has no bearing on *ethos*’s function or effectiveness (*On Rhetoric* 1.2.4).

The most influential feminist theory of *ethos* (at least, of “*ethos*” named as such) is the one offered by Nedra Reynolds in her 1993 article “Ethos as Location,” which connects *ethos*’s etymological definition as “haunt” or “dwelling place” to post-1945 feminist location theories such as Adrienne Rich’s “politics of location” and Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledges,” ultimately arguing that “writers construct and establish *ethos* when they say explicitly ‘where they are coming from’” (332). Reynolds’s understanding of *ethos* as a connecting link between classical rhetorical theory and contemporary feminist theories of location has been and continues to be immensely generative for our understanding of communication, ethics, and social inequalities (and especially the ways in which these three phenomena overlap and inform one another). That “*ethos* cannot be determined [...] without a sense of the cultural context” is absolutely right, yet even Reynolds thinks of *ethos* as something an individual or community can *have* and that is “created” in a particular

⁴ Operating with a similar definition of *ethos*, Coretta Pittman argues that, because “black women have historically been forced to comply with an Aristotelian model of *ethos formation* that ignores their experiences,” they face a number of challenges “as they attempt to *create* a good *ethos*.” Despite the continued “assumption that black women lack a positive and respectable *ethos*,” writers like Harriet Jacobs, Billie Holiday, and Sister Souljah “have asserted a positive *ethos* for themselves” by working “to redefine an *ethos* of immorality to an *ethos* of respectability in their narratives” (Pittman 43, 45, 56, 68, my emphases). While I certainly agree with Pittman’s claim that black women in the U.S. (and elsewhere) have been disproportionately associated with “criminalized and sexualized” “characters”—and that the Aristotelian model of *ethos* does not on its own account for the complexity of black women’s “lived realities and experiences”—I understand *ethos* as something different from “persona,” “reputation,” “image,” or any other similarly countable and contrivable entity (43). *Ethos*, in my view, is not a product itself but a *mode* of continuous production—something a subject can illuminate, participate in, or shift around but cannot create or acquire. (Even within a strict Aristotelian frame, it would be strange to refer to “the creation of a *pathos*” or to “a *pathos* of anger.” Because *pathos*, like *logos* and *ethos*, is defined by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* as a “*means* of persuasion”—an uncountable mode “*through*” which a speaker can persuade—we rarely refer to it as a countable end.)

“space,” such as a “geographic location” and “the space of the body” within it (329, 335). While she is interested in *ethos*’s relationship to “the between” and to “negotiated space”—something that aligns her theory with the Anzaldúan theories of *nos/otras* and *nepantla*—Reynolds’s implicit focus on nonfiction prose writing (whether feminist philosophy, scholarship in composition studies, or student essays) leads her to think about *ethos* as something not especially “artful” but, rather, as an act of “being explicit,” of “achieving rhetorical authority from a marginalized position,” and of “claiming and taking responsibility for our positions in the world, [...] for the places from which we speak” (330, 332–334, 336). Because *ethos* (as I understand it and as I see Anzaldúa’s speakers mobilizing it) is not only related to physical location but is also related to symbols, rituals, spiritual practices, and ethics (things that are tied to cultural, communal, and metaphysical locations), “artfulness” is often at the core of *ethos*’s rhetorical function. The symbolic communication of a literary text and the various elements of a ritual performance, for instance, mobilize *ethos* in a complex and multilayered way that a more “explicit” expression (such as an academic article or a student essay, which in many cases could be called more *logos*-centric) might avoid.

Furthermore, as Aimee Carrillo Rowe has argued in her critique of Rich’s “politics of location,” an overemphasis on “location” as an individualized and relatively stable position prevents us from focusing on the more pressing collective and dynamic matters of “relation,” “belonging,” and “community” (26, 40). Interestingly, Anzaldúa worked closely with (and was mentored by) both Rich and Haraway, yet the *ethos*-based rhetoric of *nos/otras* that her speaker develops in *Borderlands* and that appears in refined forms in later Anzaldúan writings quite consciously takes “situated” locations as *points of departure* for a *production of location* (and a spiritual dwelling in multiple locations) *through language*. In other words, if Rich’s, Haraway’s, and Reynolds’s (pre-1994) conceptions focus on the ways in which an individualized location or position precedes one’s speech-act—conferring an identity, an authority, or an *ethos* upon the speaker—the Anzaldúan framework deals with individualized locations and positions only at the very start: in the remainder and the vast majority of its verbal expression, *Borderlands* theorizes and practices an artful *communication of location*, helping us to see how *ethos* moves outward and is in fact a “creative” rhetorical mode.

Essence, Standpoint, and the Postpositivist Realist Theory of Identity

Part of the reason for the “situated” framework of many feminist theories of location and *ethos* in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s was the concurrent ascendance of “standpoint epistemologies” and “the postpositivist realist theory of identity” within feminist philosophy, Chicana/Latina studies, and other academic language and literature fields. As Reynolds put it in her landmark article, “Studies of feminist epistemology [...] create a convincing argument that the sex of the knower is epistemologically significant. When that knower is located as a female in this culture, knowledge is experienced, constructed, and recalled in nonhierarchical, nonlinear, and nonobjective forms” (330). While there is perhaps some slippage in these sentences (conflating “the sex of the knower” with the knower’s being “located as a female in this culture”), the general claim that a subject’s ways of being read, acknowledged or ignored, and labeled or categorized within her social context affect how she sees, learns, and speaks is valid. At the same time, because epistemology itself is concerned with *origins*, and because the particular feminist, Chicana/Latina, rhetorical, and literary theories of epistemology and postpositivist realism that emerged around the turn of the twenty-first century are concerned primarily with “identity,” Reynolds’s and related theories of *ethos* frequently limit themselves to the social formations that precede (and “determine”) the speaker’s verbal expression and suggest an emphasis on aesthetic modes of realism, of autobiography, and of polemic. While I have no quibble with these aesthetic modes, I believe at the same time that *ethos* permeates all types of communicative expressions and is especially powerful and interesting in expressions that are more

formally innovative, avant-garde, fictional, poetic, dramatic, genre-mixing, subliminal, and “artful.” If Reynolds, citing Andreas Huyssen, explains that feminist “writers earn their rhetorical authority by being responsible—by stating explicitly their identities, positions or locations, and political goals,” and thus contributing “to a revised notion of *ethos* which recognizes that even in a postmodern context, ‘it *does* matter who is speaking or writing’” (330–31)—Anzaldúa and her literary speakers ultimately move us away from the “explicit” statement of “identities,” somewhat away even from an interest in “authority,” and toward a conception of “who is speaking or writing” that is constructed just as much by the speaker or writer herself (in fiction or poetry, say) as by the society and cultures in which she has lived.

What I am also attempting to argue here is that these turn-of-the-twenty-first-century theories of *ethos* and location tend to be invested in the concept of an “essence,” whereas the theories and practices of *ethos* discussed in this dissertation (those in the work of Burke and Ellison, Baldwin and Henry, Anzaldúa, and even Aristotle—in addition to my own conception of *ethos* that emerges from readings of these works) are not invested in an “essence” or in essentialism. While many of these recent discussions of location are quite sophisticated—moving well beyond older (say, Kantian or Cartesian) models of “essence” and either claiming to reject “essentialism” outright or redefining “essence” as something constructed rather than innate—they nonetheless largely insist upon causality, “embodied facts,” “more or less stable” positions, and coherent speakerly “identities.” Despite what several critics have argued, the Anzaldúan rhetoric of *nos/otras*, like all the literary iterations of *ethos* I analyze in this project, works differently: it emphasizes creativity, shifting symbolic and spiritual attachments, multi-positional dwelling, and speakerly processes of identification with audiences. In their introduction to the 2006 edited volume *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, Linda Martín Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty (who—along with the volume’s other editors, Michael Hames-García and Paula M. L. Moya—have written on numerous occasions about “identity” through postpositivist realism) state that “[r]ealists about identity further argue that identities are not our mysterious inner essences but rather social embodied facts about ourselves in our world; moreover, they are not mere *descriptions* of who we are but, rather *causal explanations* of our social locations in a world that is shaped by such locations” (6, italics original). Alcoff’s standpoint philosophies, in particular, inform the theory of *ethos* that Reynolds developed with her colleague Susan Jarratt. Importantly, though, Jarratt and Reynolds admit their “reservations about some forms of standpoint theory,” in large part because these feminist rhetorical theorists are attempting to reconcile their understanding of *ethos* as “a created self”—in a postmodern context where “splitting” is more interesting than “being” and where a subject always “is positioned multiply and differently”—with their interest in a “responsibility” of rhetorical “explicitness” about the locations that *cause* us to be who we (essentially?) are (Jarratt and Reynolds 38, 50–53, 55–56). Although Alcoff, Hames-García, Mohanty, and Moya are careful to note that “identities are not our mysterious inner essences,” these theorists of identity politics nevertheless believe that “embodied facts” and “*causal explanations*” inform (and matter more than) “*descriptions* of who we are,” whereas the prerogative of most theorists of rhetoric and composition—like the prerogative of most novelists, poets, and other authors of literature—is to understand and practice verbal descriptions, creations, and arts. This divide creates a tension within very vital and interesting rhetorical theories from feminist and minority perspectives.

Two notable examples in rhetorical theory, appearing after Jarratt and Reynolds’s work, of this tension between authorial construction and causal essence surface in essays on *ethos* by Johanna Schmertz (in 1999) and by Paige A. Conley (in 2016). Conley argues that, “by invoking and subsequently moving between multiple discursive constructions as standpoints or ‘essences’ during a particular rhetorical event,” the Sioux writer Zitkala-Ša “successfully deployed *ethos* as a rhetorical tool for agency and resistance, carefully linking popular discourses regarding particularly ‘American’

forms of citizenship to common perceptions of the ‘Indian’ or ‘Indianness’ and ‘Indian Princess’” (175). Schmertz’s position, which also draws upon Alcoff’s work and which informs Conley’s perspective, is that we should “name a ‘politics of location’ when we speak, because when we do so, we create an essence—a subject—that demands response from our rhetorical environment” (89). Schmertz goes as far as to say that “a view of essence need not fall into the trap of either Aristotelian or Platonic essentialism,” because “[e]ven constructionism—essentialism’s binary opposite—is fundamentally dependent on essentialism to do its work: Where essentialism [like Aristotle’s or Plato’s] assumes ‘real’ essences, constructionism assumes ‘nominal’ ones—essences created by language” (87–88). Because rhetorical *ethos* to me is a constructed mode, I appreciate Conley’s and Schmertz’s interest in “discursive constructions” and the “creation” of a certain type of subjectivity through language. Still, I believe that the desire to unmoor “essence” from “essentialism,” while retaining essence as an important concern of *ethos*, creates more confusion than clarity for our understanding of rhetoric. (It is worth reiterating, too, that the postpositivist realist theorists of identity—Alcoff, Hames-García, Mohanty, and Moya—are less interested in the “nominal,” in “descriptions,” and more interested in the “real,” the realist, and in “facts.”) I do not believe “essence” means the same thing as “subject” (or “identity”), if only because it is a term that describes *that part of something (or someone) without which it (she) would not exist*. What Anzaldúa’s literary speakers and the other literary theorist-practitioners of *ethos* in this dissertation construct through language is not their own birth or immovable, undeletable core but, rather, subjectivities that can consistently shift, change, disappear, and be replaced.

For this reason, I contend that “substance” is a more useful term for the kind of nominal, linguistic construction that Schmertz and Conley have in mind. A substance, unlike an essence, can be constructed by its own carrier, is not the singular “core” of a being, can exist alongside other substances in a being, is fundamentally linguistic, can be radically altered or expanded or diminished at various points in time, and can disappear from a being without necessarily thereby spelling that being’s (or speaker’s or author’s) death. Furthermore, given the immense importance of the term “consubstantiality” to rhetorical theory and to *ethos* in particular, “substances” (as Burke tells us) serve as the vital points of connection between speakers and audiences—and these substances are created and expressed linguistically, have more to do with “identification” than with “identity,” and are not *essential* to the interlocutors involved. *Ethos*, then, is better understood not as an identity, not as “the stopping points at which the subject (re)negotiates her own essence” (to use Schmertz’s definition), nor even as a speaker’s “substance” itself—but as the *rhetorical mode of illuminating, of creating, and of identifying with substances*. For this reason, when we conceive of *ethos* as location, it makes more sense (as Anzaldúa’s speakers insist) to think in terms of “confluence” and “shifting,” as opposed to “standpoint” or “essence.”

One of Schmertz’s most insightful observations is that “[p]ostmodern theories of the subject help clarify Aristotle’s description of ethos because the premodern subject and the postmodern subject may look more like each other, in their presumed immanence within the social and linguistic spaces in which they operate, than either resembles the modern Enlightenment subject” (85). Schmertz is referring here to the centuries-old and ongoing debate over the meaning of *ethos*, given that—as Rosanne Carlo has pointed out—*ethos* even in antiquity “was seen by some (Plato; Isocrates) as something that was embodied, a part of a person’s living,” “something that precedes speaking,” and “by others (Aristotle) as something that was constructed, created by words in a speech” (12–13). The analogues between this debate over *ethos* and the various iterations of the essentialism/constructivism debate in multiple fields since at least the end of World War II are numerous and striking. What makes Aristotle’s conception of *ethos* (as emerging “from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person”) such a rich and generative philosophy for adaptation and revision by post-1945 U.S. minority writers is its surprisingly

constructivist, linguistic, artistic, and thus liberating design. I therefore agree with those readings of Anzaldúa's work (such as Susan Bickford's and Rafael Pérez-Torres's) that highlight the "existential" and not the "essential" character of subjectivity, as well as the "interlingual" process of "transgressing the rigid definitions of sexual, racial and gender" identities—whereas I do not share the opinion that *Borderlands* is "invested in a certain kind of purity" and that the book's "rhetorical force is grounded by an assumption of an essence that it cannot get rid of" (Bickford 120; Pérez-Torres 95; Cortez 111).

The last thing I wish to clarify in this section is that, following Aristotle, I understand *ethos* to be a mode of expression and persuasion whose emphasis is not affective, sentimental, or emotional (nor logical or rational) but, rather, consubstantial, spiritual, locational, and ethical. This is not to say that affects, sentiments, and emotions are somehow totally absent from constructions and practices of consubstantiality, spirituality, location, and ethics; rather, it is to say that *what is persuasive or effective* about *ethos* as a rhetorical mode is its forging of *shared identifications*, as opposed to its creation of *feelings* such as joy, rage, pity, fear, pride, and so forth. I reiterate this claim here because Ryan, Myers, and Jones explicitly state in their recent edited collection on *ethos* that they "rely strongly on [Lorraine] Code's feminist philosophy," which both stresses "standpoint" and argues that location requires "affectivity, commitments, enthusiasms, desires, and interests, in which affectivity contrasts with intellect, or reason in the standard sense" (Ryan et al. 10; Code 46). As I have stressed in the preceding chapters of this dissertation, the *reason/affect, logic/feeling, head/heart, rationality/emotionality* (and related) binaries are effectively a reduction to a rhetorical binary of *logos/pathos*, whereas it should be abundantly clear that *ethos* has been a third, differential term in rhetorical theory at least since the time of Aristotle. *Ethos*, then—while it certainly can intersect with or be informed by affect, in addition to reason—is meant to represent a mode of expression that emphasizes processes *other than* the emotional and the rational.

Notably, in a 2005 article titled "Emotion, Ethics, and Rhetorical Action," Laura Micciche makes an important claim about how it would behoove rhetorical scholars to move beyond our "persistent desires to view rational deliberation and argumentation as the central functions of rhetoric," yet even her essay—concerned as it is with "ethics"—mentions *ethos* only once and continually refers to reason and emotion as opposites in a closed binary (164). "[S]cant attention has been paid to the role of pathos in this exceedingly logos-centered conception of rhetoric," she writes. "The exclusion of emotion from theories of ethics effectively perpetuates representations of ethics as a discourse and practice driven solely by reason, despite the fact that what counts as ethical hinges on understanding how to act and feel in ways appropriate to a situation" (Micciche 163–64). The best adjective for the noun *ethos*, in English, is "ethical"—and this is precisely because *ethos* and ethics are very closely tied, as processes related to cultural, symbolic, consubstantial, and locational expressions and negotiations. It need not be the case, then, that an analysis of ethics that deemphasizes emotion necessarily implies reason as a privileged mode; symbols, substances, rituals, and locations are created and generate meaning in ways that are neither primarily emotional nor primarily rational. In multiple parts of her essay, Micciche in fact slips not-especially-affective *ethos*-related verbs and adjectives into sentences that are meant to emphasize emotionality: this is true of "act" (in contrast to "feel") in the above quotation, where what is most important is the not-particularly-emotional concept of what is "appropriate" to a given situation—and it also the case when she reiterates, later on, that "a sense of what is 'right' and 'good' in a given situation" is "a judgment that not only emerges from reasoned deliberation but also from experience and belief and feeling about what is right, what is just" (168–69). Here, the term "feeling" is almost an extraneous addition that less meaningfully describes the ethical processes of "experience" and "belief," which are not *pathos*- but *ethos*-centric. Similarly, in a recent article on how we might "resist" the violences of today's "post-truth epoch" (kept alive, quite powerfully, by a Trump administration that sanctions

“alternative facts”), Andrés Castro Samayoa and Z Nicolazzo contend that “we must feel our way toward liberation,” embracing “an *affect of collectivity*, or communal feelings of solidarity through which we can create microclimates of love and support” (990–91, italics original). Once again, the nouns “collectivity” and “solidarity” (along with “love,” if we understand that word in Baldwin’s emphatically non-sentimental sense), as well as the adjective “communal,” are the operative, *ethos*-based terms we would do well to explore—whereas “affect” and “feelings” are not *essential to* (even if in many cases they are important in) the process of forging identifications through language.

Ultimately, then, I hope to show how the *ethos*-based rhetoric of *nos/otras* that Anzaldúa and her speakers theorize and practice emphasizes location itself (along with consubstantiality, spirituality, and ethics), rather than emotionality or rationality, in its efforts to forge identifications with diverse readers. I align my approach to Anzaldúan literary texts with the analyses of Anthony Lioi and AnaLouise Keating, both of whom recognize the importance of these texts’ “spirit-work” and “spiritual politics” (Lioi 73–74; Keating, “Shifting”), and I want to explore more fully the ways in which *Borderlands*’s spirituality emerges through language—through a language of location, through *ethos*.

Rhetoric and Composition Scholars’ Responses to Anzaldúan Texts

A few scholars—especially scholars in rhetoric and composition studies—have tied the theories and prosaic strategies in Anzaldúan texts to the concept of *ethos*.⁵ Kendall Leon and Stacey Pigg look not to *Borderlands* but to Anzaldúa’s later essay “now let us shift,” in the 2002 edited collection *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*.⁶ Specifically, they view Anzaldúa’s concept of “conocimiento” as something that “offers a model of feminist ethos that is not only positioned within particular environments but also networked across multiple, shifting spaces and stages” (258). Leon and Pigg are quite right to focus on the “multiple” and the “shifting” in Anzaldúan rhetoric, yet they retain an interest in the concept of “authority” that, in my view, Anzaldúa’s various (post-1981) speakers regularly eschew—and they stop short of explicating the profound and complex *literary practices of ethos* that Anzaldúan texts provide (260–61, 274). They argue that “a reader habituated to Aristotelian compositions might expect Anzaldúa’s appeals to be presented in a deductive linear organization with a thesis or goal statement clearly stating those claims,” whereas Anzaldúa’s theory of *conocimiento* in fact requires “entering into a circular process”; “the nonlinear approach that Anzaldúa takes to writing about *conocimiento*,” then, “is a clue to how we might rethink ethos as constructed between individuals and elements of their environments and histories” (Leon and Pigg 263–64). Without a doubt, the normative practices of teaching and writing “Aristotelian compositions” (such as in a college composition course) today require linear organization and a clear thesis statement, but I want to suggest that *ethos*, even in the Aristotelian tradition, has always represented less linear or deductive and more locational, spiritual-ritualistic, and symbolic elements of rhetorical expression.⁷ It also, in my view, would be a bit strange to expect “deductive linear organization” from an Anzaldúan text, not simply because of the unique rhetorical practices Anzaldúa and her speakers regularly engage but more so because Anzaldúa is first and foremost a *literary* figure (a poet, a fiction writer, and an author of creative nonfiction),

⁵ In addition to Leon and Pigg’s essay, and Carlo’s dissertation, see Keller.

⁶ Leon—in another essay, co-authored with her colleague Ayde Enríquez-Loya—has made an excellent argument for using Chicana/Latina rhetorics, including those of Anzaldúa, “as a design methodology” for (rather than simply as “content” in) writing programs, especially at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Enríquez-Loya and Leon 213–14).

⁷ *Pathos*, too (even in the classical sense), largely escapes the linear, the deductive, and the thesis-like—a fact that in some ways might explain why normative approaches to academic writing and to the teaching of it avoid and advise against “emotional language.”

whose works feature a variety of speakers and narrators. Accordingly, we are not at all limited to one “clue” that Anzaldúa’s “nonlinear approach to writing about *conocimiento*” gives us; we, in fact, can look to *Borderlands* for lengthy and numerous literary *examples* of the *ethos*-based rhetoric of *nos/otras*.

As Marlene Hansen Esplin recently has pointed out, “the generic difficulty and relative inaccessibility” of *Borderlands*’s “openly multilingual poems” “for English readers are among the likely reasons why *Borderlands* has been approached almost exclusively as a theoretical and prose-based text” (183–84). The book’s mixing of English with a variety of Spanish, Tex-Mex, and Nahuatl expressions can itself be a challenge for some readers, but when this linguistic medley emerges in *poetry* and in non-linear, non-logical forms, it has the potential to be even more daunting. On the one hand, *Borderlands*’s continued popularity and vitality in a wide variety of fields (Chicanx/Latinx studies, comparative ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, rhetoric and composition studies, education, literary studies, anthropology, history, religious studies, philosophy, and psychology—to name only a handful) indicates that a great many readers connect with the text and find it quite useful; on the other hand, “the neglect of the poems”—of effectively the entire second half of the book—“in the predominantly English-speaking U.S. academy” indicates that a substantial portion of *Borderlands*’s complex rhetorical theory and (even more so) its complex rhetorical practice remains unilluminated in so many studies, classrooms, and conversations (Garber 214). An imperative of this chapter, then, is to weave together close-readings of *Borderlands*’s distinctly *literary* expressions with analyses of its somewhat more conventionally “theoretical” passages, to highlight the ways in which its interpretation of rhetorical *ethos* develops. We need not understand written “composition” as a domain exclusively of prose, of nonfiction, or of rational, linear expression. In fact, while *Borderlands*’s poems and nonlinear spiritual vignettes might appear at first to be rather “inaccessible,” they in many cases represent a kind of language that is *more typical* of the communicative styles of “border” dwellers, of multilingual speakers, and of people (many queer people of color, for instance) for whom code-meshing is an everyday practice.

It makes a great deal of sense, then, that a diverse group of undergraduates (including queer, Latinx, Asian American, Native American, “Anglo,” and “multiracial” students) in Sarah Klotz and Carl Whithaus’s recent “Rhetoric and Tolerance in American Society” course at the University of California, Davis, identified strongly with “Anzaldúa’s claim that ethnic identity is linguistic identity” and concluded that “*Borderlands/La Frontera* is a rhetorical theory” that offers models “as viable, if not more, than rhetorical concepts from Aristotle, Burke, [and] Mikhail Bakhtin” (73–74, 79, 88).⁸ For these diverse undergraduates, as for *Borderlands*’s speaker, identification emerges through language, the illumination and creation of shared substances, and continually negotiated locations—as opposed to being a reflection of stable constitutions, of essences and standpoints, or of one single original location.⁹ As Klotz and Whithaus explain, the students favored a concept of “identity grounded in language, region, [...] and other categories of affiliation,” and “theories of rhetoric and

⁸ Given these students’ and their instructors’ engagement with Aristotle and Burke, it is likely that they discussed *ethos* (and possible that they discussed “consubstantiality”), yet it appears almost as though they understood Aristotle, Burke, and Anzaldúa to be providing distinct and not especially overlapping theories of rhetoric. As Klotz and Whithaus explain at one point: “Aristotle had provided a framework based on rhetorical appeals for understanding speaker, audience, and structure; Burke allowed us to analyze rhetorical performance in history and context; and Bakhtin introduced the concept of dialogue and multiple voices. But Anzaldúa allowed students to see that even within a rhetorical analysis of structure, dialogue and context, ambiguities in identity, language-use, and naming emerge as tools for a contemporary rhetor engaged in antiracist projects” (80). I hope, too, that Anzaldúan rhetorical theory and practice are not understood to be limited to the context of “antiracist projects”—that is to say, compositions whose singular and explicit goal is to combat racism (though, of course, it would be ideal if *all* projects were generally antiracist in both content and form).

⁹ For another interesting example (and study) of the use of Anzaldúan texts in a college composition course, see Fike.

race came together most coherently through language use. Multilingualism, code-meshing, and linguistic pride resonated strongly with our students' experiences of race and racism" (88–89). These observations bring to light some of the major stakes of understanding Anzaldúa's rhetorical theory and practice. The verbal language of *Borderlands* is in no way a minor, niche, or "bookish" concern detached from the proceedings of everyday life; rather, it teaches us how we can communicate in a (multilingual, nonlinear, formally eclectic) mode that reveals, creates, and sustains meaningful identifications with others. For this reason, it might not be necessary to follow Carlo's suggestion that we "expand the term 'ethos' beyond the textual—beyond a constructed appeal through words—and out into a theory of identity construction" that occurs through physical "wandering" and other embodied forms of "living," because there are so many pervasive and yet still-underappreciated ways in which words and texts do the foundational work of identification through *ethos* (13, 46–47). Let us, then, look closely at the verbal literary language of *Borderlands* so that we can better comprehend how a confluent, multilingual, multi-genre, not-primarily-rational, not-primarily-affective rhetoric of *nos/otras* presents a model for the communication of location (as location intersects with consubstantiality, spirit, and ethics) as an especially affinitive and persuasive mode of expression for our current times.

Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*: Departing from "Standpoint," Arriving at "Confluence"

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, Anzaldúa's most famous literary work, employs geographic and multilingual terms in its title and features speakers who invite their readers to dwell with them in a shared "home," whether physical or spiritual. The book begins by emphasizing place itself—dwelling on and in it, expressing it on the page—rather than seeking to connect with readers didactically, either through rational argumentative claims or through appeals to the emotions. *Borderlands* immediately reaches us from multiple poetic angles, placing the speaker and her readers in a shared borderlands space:

Wind tugging at my sleeve
 feet sinking into the sand
 I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean
 where the two overlap
 a gentle coming together
 at other times and places a violent clash.

Across the border in Mexico
 stark silhouette of houses gutted by waves,
 cliffs crumbling into the sea,
 silver waves marbled with spume
 gashing a hole under the border fence.

Miro el mar atacar
la cerca en Border Field Park
con sus buchones de agua,
 an Easter Sunday resurrection
 of the brown blood in my veins.

Oigo el llorido del mar, el respiro del aire,
 my heart surges to the beat of the sea.

In the gray haze of the sun
 the gulls' shrill cry of hunger,
 the tangy smell of the sea seeping into me.

I walk through the hole in the fence
 to the other side.
 Under my fingers I feel the gritty wire
 rusted by 139 years
 of the salty breath of the sea. (*Borderlands* 23–24)

While it might be rather silly to claim that these lines possess no rational or emotional appeals whatsoever, they are clearly far more focused on the representation, in both content and form, of a physical and spiritual “dwelling place.” The wind, cliffs, waves, gulls, and the gritty barbed wire fence rusted by the salty ocean air are as specific to the San Diego–Tijuana *frontera* as are the proper-named “Border Field Park” and the houses “across the border in Mexico.” The craggy, almost sinusoidal, shape of the words on the page takes on the form at once of the “*buchones de agua*,” the “silver waves marbled with spume”; of the tugging wind or “*el respiro del aire*”; of a Pacific seagull spreading its wings; of the Aztec serpent, who becomes a central figure later on in Anzaldúa’s book; and of the jagged geopolitical border between the U.S. and Mexico, whether delineated by the fence or (further east) the Río Grande. The extra space between “I walk” and “through the hole in the fence” represents the hole itself, as well as the duration of the speaker’s movement through it. Similarly, her linguistic code-switching between English and Southwestern Spanish, alongside the fusion of a colonial Spanish-Catholic “Easter Sunday resurrection” with the indigenous “brown blood” in her veins, exemplifies the cultural “overlap”—sometimes “gentle,” at other times “violent”—that she mentions a few lines earlier.

A number of prevailing critical interpretations of *Borderlands* consider the speaker’s location-driven words as representative of a “standpoint epistemology” (sometimes of an “essence”)—or, relatedly, as representative of a “postpositivist realist” theory of the self and of the politics of “identity.”¹⁰ The postpositivist realist position runs counter to traditional-positivist, postmodernist,

¹⁰ Examples of “standpoint” readings of *Borderlands* include Fowlkes, Martinez, and Naples.

Examples of “essence” readings include Cortez and Yarbrow-Bejarano. In Yarbrow-Bejarano’s account, “The theory of *mestiza* consciousness depends on an awareness of subject positions—a concept which Diana Fuss maintains represents the *essence* of social constructionism (29)—working against the solidifying concept of a unitary or essential ‘I.’ [...] In her discussion of subaltern studies, Gayatri Spivak speaks of the ‘*Strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’ (205), an analysis that would focus ‘essentialist’ moves in *Borderlands* in terms of ‘who, ‘how,’ and ‘where’: the lack of privilege of the writing subject, the specific deployment of essentialism and ‘where its effects are concentrated’ (Fuss 20). [...] The evocation of essentialism in the text is in the service of a constructionist project, the production of a border or *mestiza* consciousness that gives voice and substance to subjects rendered mute and invisible by hegemonic practices and discourses, and is understood as the necessary prelude to *political change* (87)” (12–13).

The most substantial “identity”-focused “postpositivist realist” reading of *Borderlands* is Paula Moya’s (in Chapter 2 of her book *Learning from Experience*). Moya defines “identity” as “the non-essential and evolving product that emerges from the dialectic between how a subject of consciousness identifies herself and how she is identified by others,” yet she still believes in a distinct “epistemic status of different identities” and claims that, while “it would be a mistake to consider ‘the oppressed’ as a unitary (and, by implication, ‘essential’) category,” a postmodernist desire “to avoid the inference” that “identity, experience, and social location [...] have any kind of essential connection” serves us poorly because there are “inextricable—but complex and variable—connections between” these three categories. Moya therefore disagrees with some scholars’ “implication that the knowledge and skills acquired by women of color can be arrived at, in any sort of willful way, by people who do not share their same social locations. Being multiply oppressed is a necessary—although not sufficient—condition for developing *la facultad*” (86–90). So, while Moya is careful to avoid

and poststructuralist conceptions of subjectivity and expression, in that it rejects the notion of an ahistorical universal “man” while also insisting that there exist “causally significant features of the world” and “more or less accurate [...] descriptions of the world” to which speakers like Anzaldúa and her narrators can point rather objectively (Moya 86; Hames-García, “Who” 117–18). If the speakers in *Borderlands* appeal to location, this theory suggests, they do so by rooting themselves in a more or less stable place, and they can claim authority by describing this place with accuracy. The shift in the 1990s and 2000s toward such a postpositivist realist theory of identity emerged out of a laudable desire for coalition-building and a “progressive politics of liberation,” which critics viewed as incompatible with and even oppositional to the postmodernist and poststructuralist project of “deconstruction” (Hames-García, “Who” 118). Today’s debates over “the limits of critique” (Felski, *Limits*; Latour) operate on a similar register: if critique—or the nexus of theories that understand subjectivity and collectivity to be inessential, fragmented, and unstable—does little to promote the kinds of community formation, solidarity, and collective action that marginalized subjects need in order to combat the intersectional structural oppressions of racism, sexism, and homophobia (to name just a few), of what use is it to studies of minority literatures, to the lives of the most vulnerable, or to really any ethical-political project today?

While I agree with this particular element of postpositivist realism’s criticism (that the tear-down-but-not-build-up quality of many poststructuralist works can stymie progress and liberation), I disagree with much of its recovery of “identity politics,” with its claim that poststructuralism is intrinsically opposed to coalition-building and kinship-generation, *and* with the idea that Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* is a literary example of its philosophical principles. If earlier instances of poststructuralist theories of subjectivity often fail to account for fruitful and resistant intersectional community formations, Anzaldúa’s speaker fills much of this gap—not by rejecting poststructuralism *per se* but by contributing to it, revising it in new and vital ways that are especially generative for rhetorical theory and for our understanding of postwar (U.S.) minority literatures and cultures.

At first glance, it might appear that Anzaldúa’s speaker is a postpositivist realist theorist of identity, since she remarks in *Borderlands*’s Preface that “This book, then, speaks of my existence. My preoccupations with the inner life of the Self, and with the struggle of that Self amidst adversity and violation; with the confluence of primordial images; with the unique positions consciousness takes at these confluent streams; and with my almost instinctive urge to communicate, to speak, to write about life on the borders, life in the shadows” (19). *Borderlands* is clearly a text about the new *mestiza* writer, her subjectivity, and the locations from which and of which she speaks through experience. However, as María Lugones has pointed out, *Borderlands* is also a work of “complex communication” theory—one that holds fast to the poststructuralist principle that subjectivity *emerges from* language and politics and cannot be understood separately from these conditions. The book dwells and operates in a space of contradiction, marked by the slash and linguistic shift between “*Borderlands*” and “*La Frontera*” in its title. In other words, it is a text much less about “standpoint” and much more about “confluence”; much less about essential or result-oriented “identity” and much more about linguistic, process-oriented “identification”; much less about realist, rational, causal “truth” and much more about mythical, spiritual, rhetorical *ethos*.

aligning her perspective with the terms “essence” and “essentialism,” her interest in the “*inextricable*,” in the “*epistemic*,” in the “realist,” in “identity,” and so forth implies both an adherence to the kind of “nominal essence” that Fuss, Schmertz, and Spivak discuss and an investment in the notion that *being a woman of color is that which causes* Anzaldúa’s literary speaker to develop *la facultad* and to use language the way she does. I, in contrast, agree with the more poststructuralist readings of *Borderlands* by Norma Alarcón (pp. 151–52) and Chela Sandoval (pp. 48–52), whose focus is heavily on the speaker’s *construction* of language—which readers of many different backgrounds can adopt and adapt for their own particular situations.

It is for these reasons that Anzaldúa's speaker clarifies, on the very same page of the Preface, that while the "actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas–U.S Southwest/Mexican border," the "psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (19). Perhaps counterintuitively, given the speaker's verb "shrinks," these lines introduce the *expansiveness* of the speaker's communicative project, both in terms of the domain of the borderlands themselves and in terms of the discursive community she interpellates. While there are many ways in which a book like *Borderlands* can be read, the most common is for an individual reader to absorb, question, and (re)evaluate the words of its narrator or poetic speaker. On the page, then, a vast and complex location is expressed and imagined, yet the intimate sharing of this location between the speaker and the reader makes the gap, void, or distance between them smaller than ever before. Here, it is *the communication of location*—that is, rhetorical *ethos*—that creates, revivifies, and sustains kinship through shared identifications; it is not really, as some might expect, the shared "standpoint" (or "essence") of a racial, gender, and/or sexual identity that does this work.

At one point in *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa's speaker comments on the process of location-based identification, just before she provides an example of how to communicate location with others. "There are more subtle ways that we internalize identification, especially in the forms of images and emotions," she tells us.

For me food and certain smells are tied to my identity, to my homeland. Woodsmoke curling up to an immense blue sky; woodsmoke perfuming my grandmother's clothes, her skin. The stench of cow manure and the yellow patches on the ground; the crack of a .22 rifle and the reek of cordite. Homemade white cheese sizzling in a pan, melting inside a folding *tortilla*. My sister Hilda's hot, spicy *menudo*, *chile colorado* making it deep red, pieces of *panza* and hominy floating on top. My brother Carito barbecuing *fajitas* in the backyard. Even now and 3,000 miles away, I can see my mother spicing the ground beef, pork and venison with *chile*. My mouth salivates at the thought of the hot steaming *tamales* I would be eating if I were home. (*Borderlands* 83)

That the speaker apposes her "homeland" to her "identity" is no coincidence—and it is clear that these entities are not fixed or stable but, rather, produced and shifting. Identification takes place through a process of "subtle" internalization, within which the familiar and the familial collide. The "woodsmoke," the "immense blue sky," "the yellow patches on the ground," the "cordite," and the various Tex-Mex dishes the speaker describes are (like the elements of *Borderlands*'s sinusoidal opening poem) images and smells she remembers from her homeland, and they are intimately tied to her grandmother, her mother, her sister Hilda, and her brother Carito. Her ability, "even now and 3,000 miles away," to see these images and to experience scent and salivation constitutes one more example of "space shrinking with intimacy." By *describing* this process, in words, to her readers, the new mestiza speaker carries her homeland with her and expands its reach to include new visitors (if not new denizens). For some readers, these images and smells are fully and immediately familiar. For other readers, the familiarity emerges more through analogy (their own siblings, parents, or grandparents going through *similar* but not *congruent* processes of cooking and living)—but it is a powerful form of familial familiarity nonetheless.

One might argue that affective, or even *pathos*-based, modes of persuasion and linguistic identification are central to this part of the new mestiza speaker's communication with her readers, given her explicit references to "emotions," "smells," "perfuming," "stench," "reek," and "salivation." It is certainly true that these felt and olfactory elements are deeply engrained in the fabric of the homeland she remembers, inhabits, and communicates—and so I would never suggest that these elements be expelled or ignored from the narrative. Like Anzaldúa's speaker, I would never want us to believe that the felt, the affective, and the emotional are mutually exclusive with the inhabited, the characteristic, and the locational. However, I do wish to reiterate that, *as modes of verbal persuasion*, the emphatically sentimental or *pathos*-based can be understood as analytically distinct from the emphatically locational or *ethos*-based.

At other moments in *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa's speaker more clearly distinguishes the affective from the imagistic-symbolic. For instance, when theorizing her famous concept of "*la facultad*," Anzaldúa's speaker provides a modernized, queer-of-color revision of the classical Aristotelian rhetorical *pisteis* in which the rational, the sentimental, and the symbolic relate to one another in relatively new ways. "*La facultad*," she tells us,

is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant 'sensing,' a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings, that is, behind which feelings reside/hide. The one possessing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world.

Those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized (when not brutalized into insensitivity). Those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the darkskinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign. (*Borderlands* 60)

Clearly, *la facultad*—a term one could translate cognately into English as "the faculty," and to which the new mestiza speaker refers as a "capacity," a "sensing," a "perception," an "awareness," a "sensitivity," and a "sense"—is quite distinct here from *logos* or "conscious reasoning." She even goes as far as to say that "the part of the psyche" that mediates *la facultad* "does not speak" (in words) but, rather, "communicates in images and symbols." (We should remember here how the term "*logos*" in Aristotle's *Politics*, much more so than in his *Rhetoric*, is typically translated into English as "speech," *rational* verbal communication.) And where do "feelings" come into play? Anzaldúa's speaker tells us they live "behind"—and in many cases even "hide" behind—these images and symbols that the psyche communicates. We begin, then, to see the distinction the new mestiza speaker draws between an emotional *interior* and an imagistic-symbolic *exterior*. The "sense" of *la facultad* is not so much an affective sensation but more so a habitual/inhabited perception—and when it comes to *communication* in particular, the *ethos*-based symbolic mode covers what might have been a *pathos*-based emotional mode while also deemphasizing a *logos*-based "reasoning" mode. Indeed, women, queer people, people of color, and the "marginalized" and "outcast" experience an important affective *fear* for their safety that more readily allows them "to develop" *la facultad*, yet the most important *expressive* element for Anzaldúa's speaker is not the affective but the imagistic-symbolic.

In the Preface to *Borderlands*, in many ways outlining the plan for the whole book, the new mestiza reveals this same distinction between an emotional interior and an imagistic-symbolic exterior, tying it directly to the ever-important process of verbal communication. She writes:

My love of images—mesquite flowering, the wind, *Ehécatl*, whispering its secret knowledge, the fleeting images of the soul in fantasy—and words, my passion for the daily struggle to render them concrete in the world and on paper, to render them flesh, keeps me alive.

The switching of “codes” in this book from English to Castilian [*sic*] Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all these, reflects my language, a new language—the language of the Borderlands. There, at the juncture of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized; they die and are born. (*Borderlands* 20)

What keeps the new mestiza speaker alive are the rather affective qualities of “love” and “passion,” yet the things she loves most and is most passionate about are locational symbols and images, as well as the process of externalizing these locational symbols and images for an audience of readers. Like the “woodsmoke,” the “yellow patches,” and the “immense blue sky” she describes to us later in *Borderlands*, the flowering “mesquite” and “the wind, *Ehécatl*,” are images symbolic of the new mestiza’s homeland—ones she feels compelled to “render concrete” “on paper” so that those of us who are physically separated from them might still be able to cohabit with them through language. Importantly, Anzaldúa’s speaker almost never attempts to stake a claim in the location of the borderlands, keeping it to herself and a few close family members and friends; rather, she deliberately highlights the code-switching language of the borderlands, one that emerges out of “the juncture of cultures,” so that her readers—like her—can inhabit the sometimes “gentle” and at other times “violent” experience of being “an alien in new territory” (*Borderlands* 70). Language, both in its absorption and in its expression, becomes the most vital conduit for habituation and habitation that are spiritual, symbolic, and ethical rather than physical, embodied, or even emotional. For this reason, the new mestiza continues to remind us that, for many, “language is a homeland closer than the Southwest—for many Chicanos today live in the Midwest and the East”; that “every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a *travesía*, a crossing”; and that she is “a turtle”: “wherever I go I carry ‘home’ on my back” (*Borderlands* 77, 70, 43). The importance of location, of a “homeland,” never dwindles—but its specificity to a relatively stable geographic region (and to one’s physical presence in this region) regularly falls away in favor of a conception of location and of home that privileges movement, crossing, rhetorical expression, and hermeneutics.

***Nepantla*: An Art of “Com-position”**

Anzaldúa’s central term for this kind of complex, moving, and communicated location is “*nepantla*.” *Nepantla*, she wrote in unpublished notes, is an art of “com-position,” a way of reading and writing the world—of chaotically dwelling in multiple positions and spaces at once and then, by shifting from rational to spiritual modes of interpretation and expression, creating out of this chaos a coherent whole (Anzaldúa, “Com-positioning”). Importantly, *nepantla* for Anzaldúa and her various narrators is a form of *ethos* not only in the limited, anthropological sense of a cultural “worldview” that we can witness through a variety of habits, rituals, and other performative expressions (Geertz); it is also, and even more so, a form of *ethos* in the rhetorical sense of *composing*, *writing*, and *inhabiting* a location-based “reality” and “a philosophy, a system that explains the world” (*Borderlands* 237). Anzaldúa spent a great deal of time working in the field of composition studies—presenting at

rhetoric and composition conferences, teaching writing workshops, and developing theories and textbooks that addressed the practice of communicating rigorously with the self and with others. In two separate interviews, she spoke of com(-)position as a construction both of writing and of “reality,” with the spatial conception of *nepantla* as its guiding principle. “The art of composition,” she told Karin Ikas in 1999, “whether you are composing a work of fiction or your life, or whether you are composing reality, always means pulling off fragmented pieces and putting them together into a whole that makes sense. A lot of my composition theories are not just about writing but about how people live their lives, construct their cultures” (*Borderlands* 238). At the time, she also told Ikas that the developing theories of *nepantla* were “not a continuation of” or sequel to *Borderlands*, yet only three years earlier she said to Andrea Lunsford:

All my concepts about composition and postcoloniality come under this umbrella heading of *nepantla*, which means *el lugar en medio*, the space in between, the middle ground. [...] *Borderlands* falls into that category, but it’s just one part of this overall umbrella that’s my life’s work, my life’s writing. *Borderlands* is just one hit on it. This new book on composition, the writing process, identity, knowledge, and the construction of all of these things, is like a sequel to *Borderlands*. (Anzaldúa, “Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric” 268)

This conception of *nepantla* as a location-driven, symbolic, and deeply compositional form of experience and verbal expression indeed emerges in several parts of the original 1987 edition of *Borderlands*, even if the term “*nepantla*” was at that point a very small part of the mix. For instance, Anzaldúa’s speaker on one occasion gives her readers a meta-commentary on the drafting of *Borderlands* itself: “In looking at this book that I’m almost finished writing,” she remarks, “I see a hybridization of metaphor, different species of ideas popping up here, popping up there, full of variations and seeming contradictions, though I believe I live in an ordered, structured universe where all phenomena are interrelated and imbued with spirit. This almost finished product seems an assemblage, a montage, a beaded work with several leitmotifs and with a central core, now appearing, now disappearing in a crazy dance” (*Borderlands* 88). The kind of communication that Anzaldúa and her mestiza speaker seek, then, is much less a practice of explaining, in rational terms, why borderlands-inhabitants live as they do (or why others should sympathize with their plight) and much more a practice of *dwelling*, of invoking the locational and the spiritual, so that the writer and reader alike share a meaningful experience. It is no wonder, then, that the *ethos*-based communication of *nepantla* is deeply poetic, imagistic, and symbolic—a form more of artistic description than of reasoned explanation.

In “*La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness*,” the seventh and final section of *Borderlands*’s mostly-prosaic first half, Anzaldúa’s speaker packs a great deal of commentary on *nepantla* into an under-two-page subsection that she titles “*Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders*.” The subsection begins with this poem:

Because I, a *mestiza*,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente.

(*Borderlands* 99)

Movement and location remain central to the speaker's expression, both with her deliberate reference to continual walking within and among cultures and with her poem's multilingual, caesura-driven form. Her *alma*, her soul, among two, three, four worlds, the speaker's head buzzes with "*lo contradictorio*," the contradictory—that is, with multiple languages or *dictions* that are *contra* one another. "*Estoy norsteada*," the phrase she uses to describe the effect of all the voices that speak to her simultaneously, can mean both "I am disoriented" (the signature effect of *nepantla*) and "I am blown north" (an allusion to all new mestizas' physical and spiritual movement between México and its heavily policed northern neighbor, the U.S.).

The one and only explicit mention of *nepantla* in *Borderlands* follows immediately thereafter, within a passage that highlights the rhetorical, locational, familial, ethical, and spiritual qualities of *ethos* all at once. "In a constant state of mental nepantlism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways," Anzaldúa's speaker explains, "*la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?" (*Borderlands* 100). As both a speaker of "a patois" and a "listener" to a "collectivity," the always-moving new mestiza often struggles to find a clear discursive community. A major benefit of this *nepantla*-driven disorientation, though, is the ability to comprehend and also to communicate "the cultural and spiritual values" of multiple groups. This *facultad* is what the new mestiza's queer, feminist, antiracist, and even antinationalist modern revision of Aristotelian rhetorical *ethos* is all about. She goes on to refer to the new mestiza's self-location as "*atrapado entre el mundo del espíritu y el mundo de la técnica*"—trapped between the world of spirit and the world of technology—leading to "*un choque*, a cultural collision," in which worldviews and ethical structures are pitted against one another. Since "we [all] perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates," and the new mestiza is always "straddling all three cultures and their value systems" at once, the influx of "opposing messages"—the "coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference"—can cause a kind of paralysis (*Borderlands* 100).

Of course, keeping in mind the section title "*La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness*," Anzaldúa's speaker is not content with paralysis—or even with choosing one cultural side over the other. Instead, a new consciousness is in order, and the mestiza's unique positioning in *nepantla* makes her a model thinker and speaker in situations of seeming ethical or rhetorical impasse. Alluding once again to the Río Grande's division of the U.S. and Mexican nation-states, Anzaldúa's speaker insists that "it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions," because this series of actions is "not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes" (*Borderlands* 100–01). This "healing" of the "split" suggests an Anzaldúan political philosophy of eradicating militarized territorial borders between nation-states, or of at least allowing subjects to travel freely from one side of such a border to the other (Kynčlová). However, a contemporary subject's practice of developing new *consciousness*, a new "way of life," can begin well before the occurrence of codified geopolitical change—and it can sustain itself through language and art whether or not such geopolitical change ever comes to fruition.

"Nos/otras": A New, Nepantlish, Mestiza Theory of *Ethos*

The new mestiza's nepantlish call for her readers to "see through serpent and eagle eyes" represents, alongside a few other calls in *Borderlands*, the beginning of a complex phenomenological

and rhetorical theory in the Anzaldúa oeuvre: the theory of “nos/otras”—the confluence of “us” and “the others,” in which consciousness and identification are defined not by a frame of “either (us)/or (them)” but by a frame of “both/and.” If, at first, readers associate the “serpent” with an Aztec, or Mexican, symbolic frame and the “eagle” with an opposing U.S. symbolic frame, we would do well to remember that, in fact, both creatures are extremely important in the cultural iconographies of México, of the U.S., and of numerous North American indigenous nations alike. In 1325, the Mexica people founded their capital of Tenochtitlan (which later became Mexico City) on the site where they saw an eagle, perched atop a cactus, clutching a serpent in its beak. This symbolic image remains the centerpiece of México’s national flag and coat of arms. Similarly, the bald eagle is the U.S.’s national bird—its presence adorning the Great Seal of the United States, the logos of many U.S. federal agencies, and the reverse sides of several minted coins—while the rattlesnake serves as the principal figure of the 1775 Gadsden (“Don’t Tread on Me”) flag, as well as of the first political cartoon published in an American newspaper (Benjamin Franklin’s 1754 “Join, or Die” call for colonial unity in the French and Indian War), both of which live on, in various iterations, to this day. Even if we set aside nationalistic cultural interpretations, the eagle and the serpent represent different spatial perspectives: the former primarily moves through the air and can look down at the majority of human life below, while the latter primarily moves along the ground and can look up at the majority of human life above. There is unquestionably a certain dissonance, *un choque*, in the melding of these different spatial, national, and spiritual-cultural points of view (Is the serpent the victorious attacker or the attacked and defeated? Are these creatures symbolic of indigenous strength or of “the Vanishing Indian?”)—and it is precisely this dissonant *choque* that the new mestiza’s *nepantla*, *nos/otras*, and *serpent-and-eagle-eyes* perspectives embrace, in an effort to communicate across divides and to solidify a new, third collective consciousness that escapes the trap of ignorance and subjugation.¹¹

The titular concept of the “bridge” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*—the seminal anthology that Anzaldúa co-edited with Cherríe Moraga in 1981, six years before the publication of *Borderlands*—probably has always represented the goal of enabling writers, narrators, and readers of diverse backgrounds to dwell “on both shores at once,” yet Anzaldúa made this connotation of “bridge” much more explicit in her foreword to the twentieth-anniversary edition of *Bridge*, released in 2001. In this post-*Borderlands* foreword (which arguably represents a slight difference in opinion, between Anzaldúa and some of the volume’s other contributors, on the ethics and politics of intersectional feminist writing), Anzaldúa clarifies the rhetorical strategies she believes are at work in *Bridge*—strategies that we should continue to use in our 21st-century communicative endeavors.¹² We should remember, she says, “that *Bridge* has multicultural roots and that it is not ‘owned’ solely by mujeres de color, or even by women. Like knowledge, *Bridge* cannot be possessed by a single person or group. It’s public; it’s communal. To exclude is to close the bridge, invite separatism and hostilities. Instead we (Third World feminists) must invite other groups to join us and together bring about social change. [...] For the past twenty years, identity politics have been extremely useful, but they are too constraining. We need new strategies, new conceptions of community” (Anzaldúa, “Counsels” 263). Although rather diplomatic, this passage reveals Anzaldúa’s frustrations with those interpretations of her (and many of her *colegas*) work as “separatist” or, at least, as mired in a type of “identity politics” that seeks to lay proprietary claim to certain perspectives, knowledge, and forms of artistic expression. She, like her narrative and poetic

¹¹ One could even say that this particular serpent-and-eagle-eyes framework is a consummate illustration of *ethos*’s (and *nos/otras*’s) simultaneous ingredients of spiritual-cultural symbol, *worldview*, location, habitation, and rhetoric.

¹² I discuss Anzaldúa’s disagreements with other contributors to *Bridge* on the politics of identity, publication, and intersectional feminist writing on pages 69–70 (especially in footnotes 15 and 16).

speaker in *Borderlands*, never really sought to delimit who could read her work, learn from it, and adapt the philosophical perspective and communicative style of the new mestiza to their own day-to-day lives. The new mestiza should be a model, not an anomaly. She, who dwells in *nepantla* and in the slash that both divides and appends “*nos/otras*,” pushes us to recognize that “the rhetoric of racial categories imposed on us is partial and flawed” and that “subtle forms of political correctness, self-censorship, and romanticizing home racial/ethnic/class communities imprison us in limiting spaces” (Anzaldúa, “Counsels” 263). While certain home spaces are valuable starting points for the development of cultural consciousness and *ethos*-based communication, these spaces should be *expanded* through symbolic rhetoric and newly recognized identifications, rather than cordoned off and guarded like the geopolitical borders drawn so long ago.

What follows in Anzaldúa’s updated foreword to *Bridge* is worth quoting at length, both because it offers a complex and extremely valuable philosophy of consciousness, rhetoric, and ethics *and* because it illuminates an important consistency in Anzaldúan thought between the original publication of *Borderlands* in 1987 and the work she was producing toward the end of her life in the first years of the twenty-first century. The limiting “spaces” and “categories” of identity politics, she writes,

do not reflect the realities we live in, and are not true to our multicultural roots. Liminality, the in-between space of *nepantla*, is the space most of us occupy. We do not inhabit un mundo but many, and we need to allow these other worlds and peoples to join in the feminist-of-color dialogue. We must be wary of assimilation but not fear cultural *mestizaje*. Instead we must become *nepantleras* and build bridges between all these worlds as we traffic back and forth between them, detribalizing and retribalizing in different and various communities. [...] We are not alone in our struggles, and never have been. Somos almas afines and this interconnectedness is an unvoiced category of identity. Though we’ve progressed in forging *el mundo zurdo*, especially its spiritual aspect, we must now more than ever open our minds to others’ realities. [...] Often ostracism gives us a way out of isolation—daring to make connections with people outside our ‘race’ necessitates breaking down categories. Because our positions are *nos/otras*, both/and, inside/outside, and inner exiles—we see through the illusion of separateness. We crack the shell of our usual assumptions by interrogating our notions and theories of race and other differences. (Anzaldúa, “Counsels” 263–64)

Once again, all the elements that make up rhetorical *ethos* are central to the feminist-of-color project Anzaldúa advances. We see *location* in “roots,” the “in-between space,” our “inhabiting many mundos,” our building “bridges,” and our “inside/outside positions.” We find *commun(ication)* in “dialogue,” “*mestizaje*,” “traffic,” “retribalizing,” “interconnectedness,” and “interrogating our notions.” We recognize *spirit* in “almas afines” and in “forging *el mundo zurdo*, especially its spiritual aspect.” And we acknowledge cultural *ethics* in being “true to our multicultural roots,” in “allowing these other worlds and peoples to join in,” in “opening our minds to others’ realities,” in “daring to make connections with people outside our ‘race,’” and in “seeing through the illusion of separateness.” The matter of “interconnectedness” between “almas afines”—that is, between affinitive souls or attuned spirits—is not at all a hackneyed claim of the “we are all one race: the human race” variety. Rather, it is the Anzaldúan version of Kenneth Burke’s “consubstantiality” and Ralph Ellison’s “accord of sensibilities” that we explored in Chapter 1. If, at present, this interconnectedness “is an unvoiced category of identity,” our imperative is to recognize and expand it through *voiced identifications*—through modes of communication that illuminate those substantial

and spiritual character(istic)s that we hold in common. Just as the Burkean-Ellisonian interpretation of *ethos* correlates to the philosophy of “*e pluribus unum*,” the Anzaldúan interpretation insists (in perhaps a less nationalistic or U.S.–centric fashion) that we inhabit “many” *mundos* at the same time as we inhabit “el mundo zurdo” together; we recognize difference and plurality within the oneness of “nos/otras.”

Accordingly, the emphasis that Anzaldúa and her new mestiza speaker place on *location* can never be separated from the other *ethos* elements of rhetoric, community formation, spirit, and ethics that emerge in the lengthy passage above. The process of “inhabiting” involves the habitational and the habitual—the physical and spiritual spaces in which we dwell, in addition to the ways we speak and act. In an interview with communication theorist Andrea Lunsford in 1996—later published as “Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric: Gloria Anzaldúa on Composition, Postcoloniality, and the Spiritual”—Anzaldúa specifically invoked the concept of “nos/otras” to highlight the connections among spirit and com(-)position. “Before you can make any changes in composition studies, philosophy, or any other field,” she claims, “you have to have a certain awareness of the territory. You have to be able to maneuver in it before you can say, ‘Here’s an alternative model for this particular field, for its norms, rules, regulations, and laws.’ Especially in composition these rules are very strict: creating a thesis sentence, having some kind of argument, having logical step-by-step progression, using certain methods like contrast or deductive versus inductive thinking. It goes all the way back to Aristotle and Cicero” (Anzaldúa, “Toward” 253). Anzaldúa goes on to list “composition” as one of the major academic fields in which she works, telling Lunsford that “the first half of one of the book projects currently on the back burner” has to do “with rhetoric and composition” and “postcolonial issues of identity” (“Toward” 255, 256).¹³ She genuinely (and correctly) considers herself a rhetorical theorist—one whose creative, poetic, sometimes fictive, and always location-driven compositions themselves do the work of theory.

Even the terms “field” and “territory” are, for Anzaldúa, not empty or casual metaphors but metaphors that heavily reference location of the physical, spiritual, and discursive varieties. The same is true of the oceanic metaphor with which she follows these remarks: “It takes a tremendous amount of energy for anyone like me to make changes or additions to the [Eurocentric] model,” she says;

it’s like you’re this little fish going against the Pacific Ocean. You have to weigh the odds of succeeding with your goal. [...] OK, if I write in this style and I code-switch too much and go into Spanglish too much and do an associative kind of logical progression in a composition, am I going to lose those people I want to affect, to change? [...] So how much do you push and how much do you accommodate and be in complicity with the dominant norm of a particular field? (Anzaldúa, “Toward” 253)

In a way, the “associative kind of logical progression” that Anzaldúa mentions is a mode of composition that privileges affinities and identifications—the *ethos* elements—over syllogisms or a “logical step-by-step progression” (*logos* elements). Her concern with the balancing act between

¹³ In greater detail, Anzaldúa tells Lunsford: “I have about four different chapters of notes and rough drafts that have to do with the writing process, with rhetoric and composition. I’m also taking it into how one composes one’s life, how one creates an addition to one’s house, how one makes sense of the coincidental and random things that happen in life, how one gives it meaning. So it’s my composition theme, *compostura*. In fact, that’s the title of one of the chapters. For me, ‘*compostura*’ used to mean being a seamstress; I would sew for other people. ‘*Compostura*’ means seaming together fragments to make a garment which you wear, which represents you, your identity and reality in the world” (“Toward” 256).

pushing the boundaries of the field and accommodating its dominant norms is a microcosm of her conceptions of *nepantla* and *nos/otras* and runs through her entire artistic oeuvre.

When Lunsford insightfully asks her, “So if you’re a fish in this vast ocean, which is the Anglo-European framework, you can’t just reject the water outright but rather try to change it?” Anzaldúa’s reply begins with a definitive “Yes” (“Toward” 254). What follows is one of the earliest public articulations of the theory of *nos/otras*. “I want to speak of the *nos/otras* concept,” she says.

It used to be that there was a “them” and an “us.” We were over here; we were the “other” with other lives and the “nos” was the subject, the white man. There was a very clear distinction. But as the decades have gone by, we—the colonized, the Chicanos, the blacks, the Natives in this country—have been reared in this frame of reference, in this field. All of our education, all of our ideas come from this frame of reference. We’re complicitous [*sic*] because we’re in such close proximity and intimacy with the other. Now “us” and “them” are interchangeable. [...] I try to articulate ideas from that place of occupying both territories: the territory of my past, my ethnic community—my home community, the Chicano Spanish, the Spanglish—and the territory of formal education, the philosophical, educational, and political ideas I’ve internalized just by being alive. Both traditions are within me. (Anzaldúa, “Toward” 254)

An extension of the “mestiza consciousness” concept introduced in *Borderlands*, this concept of *nos/otras* constitutes something of a revision of W. E. B. Du Bois’s theory of “double consciousness” (in which the enlightened black subject sees through a “Negro” frame of reference while also seeing how “the white man” perceives the Negro). With *nos/otras*, the balancing act is no longer simply one of holding two distinct (and potentially forever distinct) viewpoints simultaneously but is now, in fact, a kind of reconciliation of the two viewpoints. There are still two discernible “territories” or “traditions,” yet a single, identifiable “field” or “frame of reference” accommodates both—and the mestiza subject recognizes that she, the “me,” personifies both the “them” and the “us” in *nos/otras*. As a literary and theoretical text, the whole of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (whose title alone, with its slash, exemplifies such spatial and phenomenological confluence) does the work of inhabiting, and of communicating, multiple territories at once. Hence its Chicano Spanish *corridos*, its Spanglish poems and vignettes, and its oft-footnoted, deeply philosophical prose all in one package.

If *Borderlands/La Frontera* never comments in depth on the meaning of the slash that sits in its title and in many other of the book’s sections, Anzaldúa’s explanation of *nos/otras* to Lunsford makes the aesthetics and politics of its slash quite clear:

The Spanish word “nosotras” means “us.” In theorizing insider/outsider, I write the word with a slash between *nos* (us) and *otras* (others). [...] Hopefully sometime in the future we may become *nosotras* without the slash. Perhaps geography will no longer separate us. We’re becoming a geography of hybrid selves—of different cities or countries who stand at the threshold of numerous mundos. Forced to negotiate the cracks between realities, we learn to navigate the switchback roads between assimilation/acquiescence to the dominant culture and isolation/preservation of our ethnic cultural integrity. [...] When we adapt to change we come out with a new set of terms to identify with, new definitions of our academic disciplines, and *la facultad* to accommodate mutually exclusive, discontinuous, inconsistent worlds. As world citizens we learn to move at ease among cultures, countries, and customs. The future belongs to those who cultivate cultural sensitivities to differences and who use these

abilities to forge a hybrid consciousness that transcends the “us” versus “them” mentality and will carry us into a *nosotras* position bridging the extremes of our cultural realities. (Anzaldúa, “Toward” 254–55)

This complex theorization—which Anzaldúa presents in an interview devoted to issues of rhetoric and composition—does not at all stress logical or emotional modes of interpretation and expression. Rather, it focuses almost completely on matters of *ethos*: subjective positionality, geography, the navigation of multiple cultural spheres, identification, citizenship, “customs,” and ethical “sensitivities” and relationships. While Anzaldúa appears not to elaborate much on her conception of new mestizas and of *nepantleras* as “world citizens” (and it is unclear to what degree she is conversing with other thinkers who have theorized the “world citizen” or “global citizen” concept in depth—especially since “world” or “mundo” for Anzaldúa and her literary speakers often means something different from “the globe”), it is quite evident that her *ethos*- and location-based *rhetorical theory* is invested in a postnationalist approach (Keating, “Editor’s”; Hames-García, “How”; Kynčlová). The “new mestiza rhetoric” works best in the “threshold,” rather than in a partitioned and exclusive space, and it serves communicators who are “no longer separated” by geography, even though “customs” and “cultural” matters (many of which, at one point, *emerged out of* a partitioned or isolated geographic realm) remain sources of division and “difference.” Location remains vital to this new rhetoric, though we need to make the move from conceiving of location in primarily physical and geographic terms to conceiving of it largely in terms of spirit, symbol, and character. Accordingly, making this move requires an intense negotiation of “the cracks between realities” or worldviews; even when we and our interlocutors live in “discontinuous, inconsistent worlds,” this new mestiza consciousness and rhetoric enables us to “bridge the extremes of our cultural realities,” to realize our spiritual “interconnectedness,” and to inhabit meaningful discursive locations together.

Between 1995 and her death in 2004, Anzaldúa continued to work through the relationship of location, spirit, and expression, always emphasizing “*la artista*” as the consummate communicator of *nepantla*. Only a small portion of this work, however, has been published; the rest remains in computer-file-printouts, catalogued and stored in the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. In these insightful theoretical writings, Anzaldúa makes it especially clear that the artistic communication in which she is so interested does not emerge from rhetorical *logos*. “The ability to detect the ‘*nepantla* spaces,’ she wrote in 1995, “requires the ability to shift. The shift is from rational, logical modes to what I have called ‘entering into the serpent,’ into the body which is the animal and spiritual part of us. [...] The presence of art is what it ‘says,’ how it speaks to us. Metaphors, symbols and *mitos* (myths) instead of rational language provide [a] multiple and complex range of meanings that can impact on us, transfigure us and alter our perception. Thus art has the potential to expand and change consciousness” (Anzaldúa, “*Nepantla: The Creative Process*” 1, 3). Not only does Anzaldúa here demonstrate her commitment to thinking about art, and especially writing, in communicative or “speaking” terms; she also insists that its ability to “change consciousness” comes from the complexity of its mythical and spiritual qualities—those elements that emerge from and rearticulate location, culture, *ethos*. In 1997, she noted that “*nepantla* is a postmodernist topos,” a vital part of an artistic “signifying system, a language, that speaks of dimensions of experience that can’t be translated by discursive and analytical language” (Anzaldúa, “*Nepantla: In/Between*” 1–3). Two years later, she elaborated: “Shaman-like, *nepantla* moves from rational to visionary states, from logics to poetics, from focused to unfocused perception, from inner to outer world” (Anzaldúa, “Chapter 22” 252). If Anzaldúa’s claiming of *nepantla* as “postmodernist” is not enough to illustrate its divergence from the postpositivist realist position that several critics have attached to her work, the complex, multi-locational, expansive way in which she

ultimately conceives of “the mestiza” clarifies even further the unique conceptions of subjectivity, rhetoric, and kinship that emerge in the Anzaldúan oeuvre.¹⁴

As the multiply positioned mestiza artist serves as a linguistic liaison between communities and worlds, *nepantla*'s rhetorical dwelling-*on* (which can be understood as “the familiar”) becomes a rhetorical dwelling-*in* (which can be understood as “the familial”). Even in the original 1987 Preface to *Borderlands*, the speaker self-identifies in collective form, inviting readers to join in the heightened state of *nepantla*: “Today we ask to be met halfway,” the speaker writes. “This book is our invitation to you—from the new *mestizas*” (20). Here, being “met halfway” connotes something much different from and more powerful than its colloquial meaning of “compromise”; it is, in this case, a call for readers to dwell together with the new mestizas in “el lugar en medio,” in *nepantla*.

How exactly does such a rhetorical kinship develop? In her interview with Lunsford, Anzaldúa elucidates, “I see the mestiza as a geography of selves—of different bordering countries—who stands at the threshold of two or more worlds and negotiates the cracks between the worlds. La artista is the mediator between various communities in the ‘normal’ worlds and *nepantla* in the ‘other’ worlds” (“Toward” 268). Around five years later, in unpublished notes, she wrote, “There is a spiritual component in creating our realities, as there is in writing and artmaking. And that is connection. That is what both art and spirituality have in common. Both create a moment of connection. In the moment of connection time disappears and you are taken to a transcendent state. [...] Art mediates between the material world and the world of spirit. Its purpose is the making of soul for both the artist and the audience” (Anzaldúa, “self-in community” 2). Like any of her readers, the new mestiza speaker is not one stable self but a multitude of selves and self-locations; she is not one “essential” or pre-linguistically “real” subject—defined by race, ethnicity, gender, or any other categories of social identity—but a complex, expansive, *communicative* subject who forges connections and identifications with others through *ethos*-based expression.

I, of course, do not mean to suggest that such concepts as Chicanidad, womanness, lesbianness, or working-classness are totally irrelevant to Anzaldúa and her various literary speakers as intersectional categories of identification; rather, I mean to say that these categories are only a few of many; that they *emerge out of* the linguistic, political, and ethical locations upon which the speakers draw; and that the speakers communicate these locations and create new locations in writing, as a way of forging or rekindling identifications and kinships with a diverse group of readers. For this reason, Anzaldúa can arrive at the conclusion that “both inter- and intracultural understanding can be enhanced” through writing, since “an idea like that of *Nepantla* or border crossing” is something the literary speaker works to “unravel [...] for different readers—for the academic professors and students as well as for children and the average person. I want to do it through different media, through poetry, fiction and through theory because each of these genres enriches the others” (*Borderlands* 235–36). What sustains kinship, coalition, or collectivity is not really “essence” or some other socially determined “identity” but language. And what type of language? Not the scientific, logical, or data-driven; not the sentimental, affective, or emotion-driven; but the spiritual, ethical, and location-driven.

Before taking a closer look at some more Anzaldúan literary examples of the nepantlish rhetoric of *nos/otras* in practice, I want us to take note of the most recent and fully-developed iteration of the *nos/otras* theory that Anzaldúa has given to us. It comes in the fourth chapter of *Light in the Dark/La luz en el oscuro*, a 2015 collection of several of Anzaldúa's essays that until then had never been published in full. This chapter, titled “Geographies of Selves—Reimagining Identity: Nos/Otras (Us/Other), las Nepantleras, and the New Tribalism,” includes (verbatim) many of the

¹⁴ In addition to this page (68), see pages 71–73 for an explication of the *expansive* conception of “the mestiza” that *Borderlands*'s speaker advances.

comments Anzaldúa made in her composition-focused interview with Lunsford, yet it also includes a number of important additions that elucidate *nos/otras*'s relationship to identity politics, to particular rhetorical audiences, and to *Borderlands* as a work of nepantlish literary communication. If, when reading or listening to the 1996 interview with Lunsford, one might take Anzaldúa's call for us "to navigate the switchback roads between assimilation/acquiescence to the dominant culture and isolation/preservation of our ethnic cultural integrity" to mean that assimilation and acquiescence are occasionally okay, or that the isolation and preservation of a supposedly stable "ethnic cultural integrity" is occasionally okay, the 21st-century revision of the *nos/otras* theory makes it very clear that this is not at all what Anzaldúa meant to say. "Dwelling in liminalities, in-between states or nepantlas," the updated account explains,

las nepantleras cannot be forced to stay in one place, locked into one perspective or perception of things or one picture of reality. Las nepantleras refuse to turn right onto the dominant culture's assimilation/acquiescence highway. They refuse to turn left onto the nationalistic-isolationism path demanding that we preserve our ethnic cultural integrity. Instead, las nepantleras construct alternative roads, creating new topographies and geographies of hybrid selves who transcend binaries and depolarize potential allies. (Anzaldúa, "Geographies of Selves" 82)

Reiterating the locational quality of *nos/otras*, Anzaldúa here uses the language of "turning right" to allude to a mandate that many right-wing commentators issue to minority subjects: to shed the language, the cultural practices, and the values of the "other countries" or ethnic communities with which we might have affiliations—and to "assimilate" fully into the "dominant culture" (the busy, fast-paced main "highway") of the place where we now live. Similarly, Anzaldúa's metaphor of "turning left" onto a (less-busy, isolated) "path" is symbolic of a certain left-wing philosophical strand of identity politics—one that believes in a stable "ethnic cultural integrity" requiring preservation and that therefore retains the binary framework of *us* (say, an oppressed minority group) versus *them* (say, the oppressor majority).

Some of Anzaldúa's *colegas* might disapprove of this anti-identity politics stance, yet it is a stance that she held from the late 1970s onward and that she expressed with greater fervency toward the end of her life.¹⁵ The nepantlish *nos/otras* rhetorical model simply cannot maintain the

¹⁵ When Anzaldúa and Moraga composed their letter calling for submissions to *This Bridge Called My Back* in April 1979, they included an epigraph from Adrienne Rich's "On Lies, Secrets, and Silence": "In order to change what is, we need to give speech to what has been, to imagine what might be" (Anzaldúa, Call for Submissions). Alice Walker, who only a few years later would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her 1982 novel *The Color Purple*, voiced some objections to Anzaldúa's use of a white author's language in a letter soliciting contributions to an anthology of the writings of women of color. On October 3, 1979, Anzaldúa wrote to Walker: "I agree with you—Third World women have got to start quoting each other instead of Big White Daddy or Big White Momma. However, I would still use A. Rich's quote if I had to do it over. My reasons: the intent of the anthology is to drop the walls between women of color and those between women of color and white women, especially white middle-class women. The anthology will not feature essays by white women but essays addressed to white women as well as to women of color. I needed a white woman to symbolize the other side of the bridge and who better than one I respect and admire, one who has stimulated as well as inspired me in my *lucha* as a writer and as a Chicana feminist. [...] I, for one, have had enough of walls. En hermanidad, Gloria" (Letter to Alice Walker).

In a handwritten letter to Rich herself—undated, though likely composed around the same time (Fall 1979)—Anzaldúa noted: "I'm sending [the] anthology request letter to you for two reasons. To thank you for the stimulation, encouragement, support that you and your writing have been to me. To tell you I took the liberty of using a quote from one of your essays. To tell you that I've gotten flac [*sic*] from Alice Walker and some other Black women for using a white woman's quote. I understand their point of view—which I share in other instances. In this case where Cher'rie & I

philosophical position that assimilation is beneficial or that (an inherently separatist model of) identity politics is workable, because *nos/otras* accentuates linguistic, new-topographic, and spiritual-ethical *transcendence* of the *us/them* binary, as opposed to an investment in stable or essential geographies and identities based on codified definitions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nation, and so on. The social imperative of “de-polarizing potential allies,” which Anzaldúa brings up more than once in this revised chapter on *nos/otras*, is a patently rhetorical undertaking—a mission of persuasion and of forging new identifications—and she believes we can meet this imperative only through an *ethos*-driven, non-binary “dwelling in liminalities.”¹⁶

In her twenty-first-century revision of the theory, Anzaldúa refers to *nos/otras* as “an identity narrative,” a process of *creating* new identities through “communication,” art, and a negotiation of “the cracks between worlds” (“Geographies of Selves” 81, 93, 79). As always, the connections among language, consciousness, and location are apparent. In an earlier draft of this essay, Anzaldúa calls the “slash (rajadura) between ‘nos’ (us, the subject) and ‘otras’ (other, the object)” “both the dividing gap and the space of nepantla” (“Nos/otras: the split” 22). The slash is a chasm, a river, a border between one side and the other—yet it is also the home, the dwelling place, the phenomenologically-inhabited borderlands of the new mestiza subject. Accordingly, the revised essay tells us that “otra-ness may be deceptive, merely a cage we assign to others. [...] Nos/otras (as the slash becomes increasingly permeable) puede ser el nuevo nombre de seres que escapan de jaulas” (Anzaldúa, “Geographies of Selves” 81). By saying that often “we assign” *otra* status to others, Anzaldúa holds herself and her readers accountable for the creation or maintenance of codified labels that entrap our fellow beings in “cages.” When she writes of “seres que escapan de jaulas,” she is referring in part to “human [and perhaps other animal] beings that escape cages.” However, the Spanish “seres,” like the English “beings,” can also mean “existences,” *Daseine*, spirits—and “jaula” can mean “prison,” both in the literal and in the metaphorical sense. This theory of *nos/otras*, then, is deliberately in conversation with political philosophy, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Her code-switching from English to Spanish, just after using the word “permeable” to describe the emergent status of the slash, puts the theory into practice, calling attention to national and linguistic borders while simultaneously crossing them.

The “identity narrative” that is *nos/otras* constitutes a form of rhetorical *ethos* in that it functions as a mode of subjective communication wherein the speaker uses cultural, symbolic, and spiritual language to identify with, and to seek identification from, diverse audiences. As opposed to ethnocentrism, nationalism, or other affiliative approaches that rely on current and longstanding

are trying to create bridges between our separate worlds I do not share that point of view. The women I learn from or teach are not limited to Brown or Black ones. En hermandad[,] Gloria” (Letter to Adrienne Rich).

In her 1996 interview with Lunsford, Anzaldúa also argued, “I can’t disown the white tradition, the Euro-American tradition, any more than I can the Mexican, the Latino, or the Native, because they’re all in me. And I think that people from different fields are still making these dichotomies” (“Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric” 254).

As we saw above (on p. 34), Anzaldúa in her foreword to the 2001 edition of *Bridge* explicitly argued that “identity politics” are “too constraining” and that “we need new conceptions of community”; that “*Bridge* has multicultural roots” and thus “is not ‘owned’ solely by mujeres de color, or even by women”; and that “we (Third World feminists) must invite other groups to join us and together bring about social change” (263).

Finally, the entirety of her “Geographies of Selves” essay—cobbed together by AnaLouise Keating from various unpublished notes of Anzaldúa’s, written between 1990 and her death in 2004—argues against *identity politics* as the concept is typically conceived, whether in essentialist or postpositivist realist terms.

¹⁶ The revised chapter, published in 2015, appends the following addition (that which I have marked with italics) to the 1996 version: “The future belongs to those who cultivate cultural sensitivities to differences and who use these abilities to [...] carry us into a nos[/]otras position bridging the extremes of our cultural realities, *a subjectivity that doesn’t polarize potential allies*” (Anzaldúa, “Geographies of Selves” 81).

definitions of (for instance, racial, sexual, or gender) identity, the affiliative approach of *nos/otras* is, in Anzaldúa's words, a "new tribalism." "The new tribalism," she writes, "is about being part of but never subsumed by a group, never losing individuality to the group nor losing the group to the individual. The new tribalism is about working together to create new 'stories' of identity and culture, to envision diverse futures. It's about rethinking our narratives of history, ancestry, and even of reality itself" (Anzaldúa, "Geographies of Selves" 85). Not only does this affiliative approach refuse to embrace passed-down rules and definitions—or to surrender either to a mob mentality or to the claims of a messianic individual. It also requires that the negotiation, the "working together," among members of the new tribe take place through *ethos*-based communication: their task is to create new "stories," new "narratives" of identity and ancestry, of culture and history, and of the conscious "reality" that they perceive and dwell in together.

For this reason, at the end of her revised essay on *nos/otras*, Anzaldúa gives special mention to literary and artistic creators as models for the *ethos*-based communication she propounds. "Let's look toward our nepantleras (poetas, artistas, queer, youth, and differently abled)," she says, "who have a tolerance for ambiguity and difference, la facultad to maintain numerous conflicting positions and affinity with those unlike themselves" (Anzaldúa, "Geographies of Selves" 94). Readers of Anzaldúa's later writings—including her friend and collaborator AnaLouise Keating, who edited this 2015 volume—are right to point out that Anzaldúa's philosophical concerns shifted from an emphasis in the 1980s on territorial, sometimes oppositional, and more conventionally identitarian approaches to a greater emphasis in the second half of the 1990s and in the 2000s on spiritual, com(-)positional, and more global-affiliative approaches (Keating, "Editor's" x, xiv–vi, xxi–iii, xxxii–vii). However, this one single sentence from "Geographies of Selves" illuminates the great extent to which the new mestiza speaker in 1987's *Borderlands* in fact had been theorizing and embodying the postnationalist, spiritual, and rhetorical *ethos*-based mode of *nos/otras* all along. *Borderlands*'s speaker is a queer poeta and artista (and quite possibly a "young" and "differently abled" one, at that)—and the phrases "la facultad" and "tolerance for ambiguity" are *hers*, both in the sense of terms she coins in *Borderlands* and in the sense of qualities she possesses.

We might consider "nepantleras" a larger and broader group than "new mestizas," if the latter term seems to imply a specific geopolitical (hemispheric American) and racial (part-white, part-*indígena*) identity that the former does not require—but we should remember *Borderlands*'s description of the new mestiza as a subject "in a constant state of mental nepantlism," and I want to suggest that both the new mestiza and the nepantlera in Anzaldúa's oeuvre are meant to be understood as theorists, artists, and rhetoricians defined by their locational *nos/otras* philosophy and aesthetic, rather than as subjects defined by the particular physical lands or ethnic identities they inhabit (see Keating intro xxii–iii). This is not at all to say that the particularities of the subjects' physical homelands and ethnic identities are irrelevant to their theories, linguistic expressions, and artistic creations. Quite the contrary. It is to say that what makes a subject *definitively* a "new mestiza" or a "nepantlera" is the theory, rhetoric, and art that she expresses—and all of this expression emerges from, and is imbued with, the locations in which she dwells.

In fact, in the subsection of *Borderlands* called "A Tolerance for Ambiguity," Anzaldúa's speaker communicates in a relatively detached mode, intimating that "*la mestiza*" is any subject who crosses and transcends borders (whether physical, psychological, or cultural). The speaker primarily uses a third-person narrative voice, before shifting back to the collective first-person, to assert that what defines the new mestiza consciousness is a rejection of static or stable habitats and habits, as

well as of rhetorical *logos*, in favor of dynamic and creative habitats and habits, as well as of rhetorical *ethos*.¹⁷ She explains:

La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes.

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. [...] Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (*Borderlands* 101)

The new *mestiza* does not eschew analysis or ignore habitual formations, yet she does deemphasize “rational” approaches that attempt to eliminate seeming outliers or “mythical” qualities on the path to a particular outcome. She also uses “habitual formations” as a point of departure: by understanding the particular habits, rituals, and patterns of one location, in addition to understanding the *different* habits, rituals, and patterns of another location, the *nepantla*-dweller can begin to move “toward a more whole perspective” that (irrationally) “includes” the contradictory cultural elements of multiple spheres and turns this “ambivalence into something else.”

What is this “something else”? The answer that Anzaldúa’s speaker gives us reveals yet another crucial way in which her *nos/otras* theory is a retreat from rhetorical *logos* and a rendition of rhetorical *ethos*: like Burke and Ellison (whose theories of communication we unpacked in Chapter 1), *Borderlands*’s new *mestiza* speaker is interested in the *Gestalt* principle—that “the whole is other than the sum of its parts”—and its application to the construction and dissemination of cultural myths. Continuing her theorization of *la mestiza*’s “more whole perspective,” Anzaldúa’s speaker writes:

In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm.

En unas pocas centurias, the future will belong to the *mestiza*. Because the future depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness. (*Borderlands* 101–02)

“Perspective,” “consciousness,” “paradigm,” and “perception” are all issues of phenomenology, but in Anzaldúa’s oeuvre these terms continually refer to “culture,” to myth, and to social constructions—not to essential, genetic, or apolitical structures. This emphasis on cultural narratives of identity and character (“the way we see ourselves,” “the ways we behave,” and—remembering Anzaldúa’s definition of *compositio*n—“the way we perceive reality”) makes it patently clear that what *Borderlands*’s speaker is offering us in this passage is a theory of rhetorical *ethos*. She effectively sidesteps the affective dimension with the qualifier “though it is a source of intense pain,” in order

¹⁷ As becomes clear in the passages I quote from this subsection (as well as in the passage I quoted above, about “creating new ‘stories’ of identity”), my term “creative” here means both “artistic” or innovative and “always-being-created” or innovated.

to underscore that the “energy” of the new mestiza consciousness “comes from continual *creative motion*” (that is, both rhetorical artistry and locational movement)—a creative motion that produces “a new mythos.” Finally, her statement about the future “belonging to the *mestiza*” is noteworthy for several reasons:

- (1) it indicates that what defines *la mestiza* is her ongoing *act* of “straddling two or more cultures,” rather than a *particular* multiethnic makeup or physical homeland;
- (2) its code-switching (“*En unas pocas centurias, the future will...*”) yet again serves as an *example* of this cultural “straddling”;
- (3) the fact that this “straddling” is *linguistic* reiterates its non-essential nature and showcases the importance of rhetorical theory and practice: *many* people have the capacity to communicate in this manner—to dwell in multiple spheres and to take on a new mestiza rhetoric—and it is this act, in and of itself, that is transformative.

Importantly, even though *Borderlands*’s speaker shares with Burke and Ellison a *Gestalt*-, worldview-, and “interconnectedness”-infused theory of rhetorical *ethos*, her particular version of *ethos* somewhat distinguishes itself through its insistence on always “breaking down the unitary aspect” of a given paradigm. She truly “tolerates” (and asks her audience to tolerate) contradictions and ambiguity, rather than merely acknowledging these contradictions before explaining them away with one single reason or cause. Likewise, she *maintains* her dwelling in multiple locations at once, rather than using her experience as a springboard to find a more comfortable singular location.

Accordingly, if we embrace what Anzaldúa calls “the nepantla mind-set”—a frame of reference that “eliminates polarity thinking where there’s no in between, only ‘either/or,’” and that instead “reinstates ‘and’”—we should focus on the ways in which *Borderlands*’s new mestiza speaker is *affinitive* or consubstantial with other subjects (including all of us readers), more so than on the ways in which she is an *oppositional* figure (“Geographies of Selves” 82). The *nos/otras* concept, like Burke’s “consubstantiality” and Ellison’s “accord of sensibilities,” urges us not to erase or forget the “otra”-ness, the differences between subjects (differences that must exist for *persuasion* to be necessary)—but it clearly implores us to realize the “nos,” the “interconnectedness” between beings, as well. Hence the nepantla mind-set’s emphasis on “and,” a coordinating conjunction that syntactically recognizes the equality in rank or weight, as well as the distinctness in meaning or definition, between the terms that abut its two sides. A “nepantla brain,” Anzaldúa tells us in her twenty-first-century essay, “would facilitate our ability to look at the world with new eyes. Navigating the cracks is the process of constructing life anew, of fashioning new identities. Nepantleras use competing systems of knowledge and rewrite their identities” (“Geographies of Selves” 82). We can make a very strong case, then, that the nepantla brain represents the realization of the call that *Borderlands*’s new mestiza speaker advances for “the split between the two mortal combatants” (the “competing systems of knowledge”) on either side of the river-border to be “somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes.” The “new eyes” with which we should “look at the world” are not *either* serpent eyes *or* eagle eyes but are an intersectional combination of the two, whose perspective exceeds (and is something other than) the sum of the eagle-eye view and the serpent-eye view.

What emerges from this locational *com-position*, as opposed to *opposition*, is a “construction,” a “fashioning” of “new identities” through language and “writing.” Admittedly, these new perspectives and identities do retain some elements of the colonial frame of reference, in addition to some elements of the precolonial frame of reference—yet the *com-position* is ultimately a decolonial one, and it requires an ethical approach from all parties involved. In “Geographies of Selves,” Anzaldúa’s *nos/otras* position is exceedingly open, accessible, and welcoming to diverse identities (as it must be, if it preaches a community of “opposing messages” and “competing systems of knowledge,” free of policed borders), but she does concede in a parenthetical that “[i]dentities such

as those of neo-Nazis and other hate groups with unethical behavior are not included” (84). Reconciling the position of eradicating the policing of borders with the position of excluding “identities such as those of neo-Nazis” is quite hard (some would argue *impossible*) to do. Perhaps one reason Anzaldúa never published “Geographies of Selves” during her lifetime is that she was still working out the knots in this com-positional theory at the time of her death. But it is important to note that this parenthetical comment is not exactly saying that the *people* who (at one point or another in their lives) identify as “neo-Nazis” should be excluded from the *nos/otras* framework; rather, it is saying that *identities* like “neo-Nazi” cannot exist in this framework, the reason being that they are created out of “unethical behavior.” It is difficult to discern what exactly “unethical behavior” means for Anzaldúa, but given the plethora of other important ways in which her philosophy involves and develops the elements of rhetorical *ethos*, I want to propose that the “unethical” is that which refuses the possibility of shared locations and identifications, of dialogue and persuasion, of the equal humanity of other subjects. The *nos/otras* position accommodates, and in fact embraces, interlocutors who hold opposing viewpoints (even on matters of “morality”); what the *nos/otras* position cannot accommodate, however, is those who refuse to interlocate, to dialogue with others. It is an *ethos*-centered theory of *communication*, not a moral philosophy or a theory of government.¹⁸

Com-positioning, *Nepantla*, and *Nos/Otras* in Practice

What does the com(-)positional process of “navigating the cracks” and “fashioning new identities” look like? We already have seen some examples, from *Borderlands*’s mostly-prosaic first half, of the new mestiza speaker’s *nos/otras* rhetoric—with its linguistic and cultural code-switching, as well as its emphasis on *location* in both content and form. It is no coincidence, though, that many of the expressions most emblematic of *nos/otras* in *Borderlands*’s first half are *poetic*, rather than prosaic, since poetry can more readily accentuate “unusual” syntax, the visual elements of writing on the page (whitespace, enjambment, letters and words as images), ambiguities, and symbolic (rather than rational) communication.¹⁹

Accordingly, *Borderlands*’s almost entirely poetic second half, titled “*Un Agitado Viento / Ehécatl, The Wind*,” features a number of illuminating com(-)positions. In “*Cibuatlyotl, Woman Alone*,” for instance, navigates the cracks between contrasting subjectivities, ethnic identifications, languages, temporalities, physical locations, and species—all in its final thirteen lines:

¹⁸ The slash in *nos/otras* signals that there might always need to be an “other” of some sort (as is the case, for instance, in Carl Schmitt’s concept of the *friend/enemy* distinction), yet the new tribe of the “us” in Anzaldúan philosophy both *includes* the “other” and *is only one of many tribes we can inhabit*. In this vein, too, *nos/otras* is similar to Burke’s concept of “consubstantiality.” Let us assume that two subjects—Dr. Guerrero and Dr. Paz—are frenemies who know each other quite well. The two doctors can relate to one another in the following ways: In Tribe A, both Dr. Guerrero and Dr. Paz are members of the “us.” In Tribe B, Dr. Guerrero is one of the “us,” whereas Dr. Paz is one of the “others.” In Tribe C, Dr. Guerrero is one of the “others,” while Dr. Paz is one of the “us.” Finally, in Tribe D, both Dr. Guerrero and Dr. Paz are among the “others.” It is also worth noting that the particular gendered quality of *nos/otras* (with its “feminine *a*”) registers its feminism, its queerness, its newness, its departure from the masculinist and (hetero)sexist traditions of old—but it is also (as the conventional, masculine Spanish word “*nosotros*” purports to be) a term that *includes all genders*.

¹⁹ It is worth reiterating here that (as Anzaldúa explained in her 1985 letter to Ann Russo and Patricia Cramer) *Borderlands* began as a book *entirely* of poetry. (See also Footnote 1.) What is more, Anzaldúa wanted to publish her drawings and illustrations alongside the verbal text in *Borderlands*; much to her chagrin, her editors and publishers consistently rejected the idea. A few of the illustrations managed to sneak themselves in (on the book’s cover and title page), and Keating’s new edition of *Light in the Dark* helpfully includes a number of Anzaldúa’s sketches within its chapters.

We Mexicans are collective animals. This I
 accept but my life's work requires autonomy
 like oxygen. This lifelong battle has ended,
Raza. I don't need to flail against you.
Raza india mexicana norteamericana, there's no-
 thing more you can chop off or graft on me that
 will change my soul. I remain who I am, multiple
 and one of the herd, yet not of it. I walk
 on the ground of my own being browned and
 hardened by the ages. I am fully formed carved
 by the hands of the ancients, drenched with
 the stench of today's headlines. But my own
 hands whittle the final work me. (Borderlands 195)

The left side of the justified poem tends to highlight group identities and perspectives, as well as the controlling *forces* behind the construction of subjectivity, while the right side tends to highlight individual identities and perspectives, as well as the *effects* of subjectivation on the speaking subject. The middle—with phrases like “lifelong battle,” “*india mexicana norteamericana*,” and “of the herd, yet not of it”—emphasizes contradiction, conflation, and ambiguity. If we look not only to the words themselves but to the whitespace between them, we can see the “cracks,” even the “holes in the fence,” of which the new mestiza poet has spoken before. At first, then, a location-based reading of this poem suggests that the left and right sides represent “opposite river banks”: if the right side exclusively uses English and embraces individuated human agency with words like “I” and “autonomy,” it embodies the northern, U.S. bank of the Río Grande, while the left side’s use of italicized Spanish, its collective identification in “We Mexicans,” and its references to objects (“thing”), chemical elements that limit human agency (“oxygen”), non-human sentient beings (“animals,” the “ox” in “oxygen”), and plant life (“chop off”) mark it as the southern, Mexican bank.

Upon reading the poem more closely, however, we see that its communication of location happens not only through a left/right split (with meaningful gaps in the middle); it also happens from top to bottom, with many words and whitespaces serving as signifiers of *mestizaje*. In the first half of this excerpt (from “We Mexicans” to “change my soul.”), the poet’s direct address is to her “*Raza*,” whom she twice hails with a “you.” In the second half, concluding the poem, her address turns both outward and inward, as the “you” specifying *la Raza* disappears, allowing a wider group of readers to identify as her target audience, and as the self-focused “I” and “me” statements increase. But if the semantic progression from beginning to end (with a potential volta of “But my own / hands whittle / the final work / me”) seems to be from a less anthropocentric “collective” “*mexicana*” perspective to a more anthropocentric individual U.S. lens, the whitespace preventing the poem’s final word and period from reaching the right margin—along with the proliferation of (sometimes rhyming) passive-voice constructions (“am [...] drenched with / the stench”); of non-human animal and mineral vocabularies (“herd,” “ground [...] browned,” “hardened,” “carved,” “whittle”); and of mixed temporalities (“the ages,” “the ancients,” “today’s headlines,” “the final work”)—remind us that the new mestiza poet is emphatically a *mestiza*, never fully embracing an all-English, U.S.- (or Euro-)centric, *Anglo*, individuated human subjectivity.²⁰ The fact that “I am, multiple” emerges on the poem’s bottom-*right*, while “and one” emerges through enjambment on the poem’s bottom-*left*, further indicates the mixed, moving, “contradictory” character of the poet’s

²⁰ There is potentially much more to say here: “Raza” can mean “race” or “breed”; “rasa” (which sounds the same) can mean it/she “levels,” “grazes,” or “rubs.” As a colloquial term, “the ancients” tends to (but does not always) refer to classical Greek and Roman figures (such as—to use Anzaldúa’s references in her interview with Lunsford—“Aristotle and Cicero”).

nos/otras rhetoric, as well as of the “opposite river banks” themselves. Does “*Raza india mexicana norteamericana*” refer to one unified race or position—or to multiple different races and positions? The answer, of course, is *both*.²¹

A number of other poems in *Borderlands*’s second half (“Nopalitos,” “Poets have strange eating habits,” “Interface,” and “Don’t Give In, *Chicanita*,” to name just a few) continue the text’s location-driven *nos/otras* rhetoric. I want to focus our attention on just one more poem of this kind—“To live in the Borderlands means you”—since in many ways it is a microcosm of the whole of *Borderlands/La Frontera*. If the post-colon subject of the book’s title is the third-person “*The New Mestiza*,” and the book’s multiply-located new mestiza speaker uses the first person in her verbal expressions to her readers, the interpellated subject of this *poem*’s title is the second-person “you”; accordingly, the poem does not at all mask its rhetorical function of communicating a constitutional message to a readerly audience, and it rounds out the *nos/otras* philosophy of inviting “*otras*” into the “*nos*” who dwell in, and speak from, the borderlands.²² The poem’s opening stanza, of which the title is the first line, reads:

To live in the Borderlands means you
are neither *hispana india negra española*
ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed
caught in the crossfire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back
not knowing which side to turn to, turn from; (*Borderlands* 216)

The first line break and indentation, following “means you,” allows us to interpret the opening line both as a complete sentence (“you” are the sum of what it “means” “to live in the borderlands”) and as an incomplete statement that compels us to keep reading (it means “you” ... “are,” “eres,” “caught,” “carrying,” “not knowing”). For the poet, then, identification emerges through location, dwelling, and language. *Dwelling* is the focus of the infinitive “To live in”; *location* is the focus of “the Borderlands”; *identification* is the focus of the connotative and definitional phrase “means you”; and *language* is precisely that which follows this entire opening line: the series of experiences, labels, and actions that are described, through poetic expressions, in the five lines that ensue.

One might argue that this poem, along with other parts of *Borderlands*, is “autobiographical,” or a form of what Steven G. Yao has called “lyric testimony,” wherein an ethnically marked subject uses poetic language to describe particular life experiences that reflect her identity (14–15). This poem, then, might be using the word “you” not as a true second-person pronoun but as a “generic *you*” that ostensibly could refer to any subject but, in reality, is alluding to the borderlands-dwelling speaker herself. But we should ask why this poem, unlike the vast majority of *Borderlands*’s narrations and poetic expressions, uses “you” instead of “I,” “we,” or “they”—and we should pay attention,

²¹ This is true not only because “*Raza*” (like the lack of commas or slashes between the adjectives that follow it) implies a singular noun, while “*india*,” “*mexicana*,” and “*norteamericana*” are often conceived as adjectives describing different nations and identities. It is true also because, on many occasions, Spanish speakers use “*norteamericana*” to mean “(U.S.) American,” while in other cases they mean “(continental) North American”; similarly (like the English term “Indian”), “*india*” frequently means “Native American,” yet it also frequently means “(South Asian) Indian.” The silliness of colloquial speech in cases like these is important to Anzaldúa, and it provides on its own a fascinating linguistic-anthropological commentary on hemispheric American cultures.

²² By “constitutional,” I mean, first, the manifesto- or Constitution-like form of this poem, which defines who is a borderlands-dweller and assigns duties and privileges to these subjects; in keeping with this definitional quality of the poem, I use “constitutional” here also to refer to the “means you” quality of the poem—that the borderlands-dwelling subject *is, in her ever-evolving constitution*, the things that the poem describes.

too, to the slippages in the above stanza's "racial" identity labels. *Borderlands's* speaker frequently self-identifies as *mestiza* (and, somewhat more hesitantly, as "india," "Hispanic," and "Spanish-American"), yet she never directly refers to herself as "*mulata*" (or "*negra*" or "*gabacha*") (*Borderlands* 84, 195).²³ What, then, do we make of the line "*eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed*"? Strictly speaking, these three terms, as adjectives that describe racial or ethnic identities, have distinct meanings in the Americas: *mestiza* means part white-European, part indigenous-American; *mulata* means part white-European, part black-African; and "half-breed" is a pejorative term used to describe any number of mixed-race subjects—but especially those who are *half* white-European, *half* indigenous-American. Under these definitions, one cannot be "*mestiza*," "*mulata*," and "half-breed" all at the same time, "carrying all five races on [her] back." And this is precisely the point of this poetic stanza: the speaker is not really claiming a particular racial identity, nor is she using "*eres*"—"you are"—to place particular ethnic labels on her readers; rather, she is claiming that what unites the *mestiza*, the *mulata*, and the "half-breed" is the subjective position of being "caught in the crossfire between camps," "not knowing which side to turn to, turn from," and the *philosophy* and *language* that such a borderlands-dweller develops within this position.

Importantly, at the beginning of *Borderlands*—just after the long, serpentine, river-like opening poem that we explored above—the speaker explains, "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (*Borderlands* 25). If the serpentine opening poem is a first-person expression, and this prose paragraph that follows is a third-person account, "To live in the Borderlands means you" is a second-person composition that interpellates its readers as borderlands inhabitants, inviting them to continue traversing "the confines of the 'normal,'" in whatever form this traversal might take. *Anyone* living in the borderlands is a hybrid subject, with the potential to dwell in *nepantla*. This fact becomes clearer as the second-person poem continues.

Even as some elements particular to the U.S.–Mexico border remain in the language of the poem, the dwelling place that is the "Borderlands" expands geographically, shifts from physical territory to the realm of habits and character, and becomes more symbolic and metaphorical than literal. A borderlands-dweller, the poet tells us, is one who will "put *chile* in the borscht," creating a Mexican-Ukrainian fusion dish; who will "eat whole wheat *tortillas*," sometimes favoring nutrition over tradition; who will "speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent," blending historically disparate vocabularies and sounds (*Borderlands* 216). In keeping with the references to food, Anzaldúa's poet goes on to describe a process of grinding, kneading, and baking grains:

To live in the Borderlands means
the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off
your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart

²³ In another part of *Borderlands*, the speaker comes close to identifying as "all races"; her reference, though, is not to specific ethnic identities but to always-shifting philosophical positions: "As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet" (102–03). This passage—with words and phrases like "collective cultural/religious beliefs," "story," "explain the world," "value system," and "symbols"—also illustrates how important *ethos* is to the new *mestiza* speaker's project in *Borderlands*.

pound you pinch you roll you out
 smelling like white bread but dead; (*Borderlands* 217)

Contrasted here are the organic earthliness of the poem's "you" (who has a "kernel" for a "heart" and is "olive-red") and the mechanistic "mill" that "wants" to destroy this "you" with its "razor"—"crushing," "pounding," "pinching," and "rolling" it to death. Significantly, it is "white teeth" that hope to do the work of violently manipulating "olive-red skin," turning it into something "like white bread but dead."²⁴ If the dominant culture essentially plans to "kill the Indian and save the man"—having the "olive-red" mestiza subject reject all of her indigenous (or Latinx, black, queer, and so forth) values, symbols, and rituals, in favor of an assimilatory embrace of "white" practices—this plan never comes to fruition in the poem, as the new mestiza poet and her borderlands ways of life are not at all "dead" but fully *alive*. Her poetry continues to code-switch, to move between cultures and territories, to embrace multiplicity and difference.

Ultimately, for Anzaldúa's poetic speaker, what it means to live in the borderlands is *to be one with* the location of crossings and conflicting cultures. "[Y]ou are the battleground / where enemies are kin to each other," she explains; "you are at home, a stranger" (*Borderlands* 216). In this context, being "at home" does not simply mean being physically located in one's homeland; it means intimately understanding, even being somewhat comfortable with, the condition of contradiction and otherness. Because, in the borderlands, enemies are family, being "a stranger" is familiar. Conflicts take place within and through you. The poet reminds us:

Cuando vives en la frontera
 people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
 you're a *burra*, *buey*, scapegoat,
 forerunner of a new race,
 half and half—both woman and man, neither—
 a new gender; [...]

To survive the Borderlands
 you must live *sin fronteras*
 be a crossroads. (*Borderlands* 216, 217)

To *be* a crossroads, to have "people walk through you," is to go beyond witnessing and undergoing translations, altercations, and exchanges; it is to *host* and *embrace* such movements, battles, and conversations—and, ultimately, to go from accommodating both the *nos* and the *otras* to engendering a coalescence into "*nosotras* without the slash." If having others amble "through you" while the wind pilfers "your voice" requires that you endure quite a bit of violence, being one with the environment—with the land, water, sky, flora, and fauna—makes possible a future of improved communication and cohabitation.

Following the violent line of penetration and voice theft, the faunal terms "*burra*," "*buey*," and "scapegoat" evoke rather negative connotations: like the English word "ass," *burra* can refer both to a (female) donkey and to an "idiotic" human. Similarly, *buey* means both "ox" and something like "dumbass."²⁵ A "scapegoat," indeed, is one who has others "walk through" her, unfortunately

²⁴ In the Texas-México borderlands, the term *bolillo*—which typically refers to a roll of (white) French bread—is also used, like the earlier-mentioned term *gabacha*, to describe a white person.

²⁵ In borderlands Spanish and Spanglish, *buey*—somewhat like "dumbass"—can be not only a term of ridicule but also a term of endearment between friends. The term *güey*, which derived from *buey*, can mean the same things in colloquial

bearing the blame or punishment on their behalf. But what happens when these labels are embraced and re-appropriated—when the nepantlish subject identifies with the land, the wind, the donkey, the ox, and the “goat”? She can be the “forerunner of a new race,” “a new gender”—representing the emergent, rather than the dominant, either defanging or eradicating the categories that divide living things. This is what it means for one (internally, philosophically, actively) to “live *sin fronteras*,” even if other kinds of (external, codified, static) borders never totally disappear. In fact, the footnote to this poem further exemplifies such a *nos/otras* theory and practice of *being* the location of exchange and discourse, rather than a delimited and exclusionary entity: unlike many other entries in *Borderlands*, this poem translates in its footnote six of its (Chicanx) Spanish words into English so that readers unfamiliar with these terms (*burra*, *buey*, and *sin fronteras*, in addition to *gabacha* and *rajetas*) will be able more readily to heed the poet’s interpellative call to cohabitate with her in the borderlands. These readers might (usually) dwell outside the poet’s specific Chicane frame, or the geographic area where the U.S. and Mexican nation-states meet, but this does not at all mean that these readers cannot or do not dwell inside the more expansive zone of *mestizaje*, *nos/otras*, and *nepantla*—a zone not exclusive to particular ethnicities or physical territories.

Away from a Logic of Property & Appropriation, Toward a Spirit of Propriety & Appropriateness

While Anzaldúa and her mestiza literary speakers are sincerely interested in cultural exchange—in moving between worlds—they also take care to explain that such exchange and *travesía* carries an ethical responsibility: one must genuinely *dwell* in the cultures and worlds whose languages and practices one adopts. Again, this philosophy is not really one of partitions and exclusions (“you’re not *from here*, so you *can’t* speak or act *this way*”), but it is one of contextualization and groundedness (“you *live here with us*, so you *should understand why* we speak and act *this way*, and feel free to adopt these loca(tion)al practices, as long as you keep their *characteristic complexity* intact”). Longtime residents and recent arrivals alike enjoy these freedoms and shoulder these obligations. In a fascinating section of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa’s speaker, citing the anthropologist Robert Plant Armstrong, argues that many non-Western cultures valuably “keep art works in honored and sacred places in the home and elsewhere,” treating them “not just as objects, but also as persons. The ‘witness’ is a participant in the enactment of the work in a ritual, and not a member of the privileged classes” (90). Within this mode, art is understood to be especially rhetorical, possessing a subjectivity that communicates with human interlocutors in a ritualistic fashion. One who encounters a work of art, then, is not a “spectator” or a ticket-buying patron but, rather, a “participant.” Given that Anzaldúa and her speakers believe in the congruity and inseparability of art and social life, they understand the function of art to be the same as the function of ethical communication and cultural exchange. As they put it:

Ethnocentrism is the tyranny of western aesthetics. An Indian mask in an American museum is transposed into an alien aesthetic system where what is missing is the presence of power invoked through performance ritual. It has become a conquered thing, a dead “thing,” separated from nature and, therefore, its power.

Modern Western painters have “borrowed,” copied, or otherwise extrapolated the art of tribal cultures and called it cubism, surrealism, symbolism. The music, the beat of the drum, the Blacks’ jive talk. All taken over. Whites, along

speech, yet it now more often means something insult-free, like “dude.” The contradictions here are meant—as they are throughout *Borderlands*—to be recognized and embraced.

with a good number of our own people, have cut themselves off from their spiritual roots, and they take our spiritual art objects in an unconscious attempt to get them back. If they're going to do it, I'd like them to be aware of what they are doing and to go about doing it in the right way. [...] Instead of surreptitiously ripping off the vital energy of people of color and putting it into commercial use, whites could allow themselves to share and exchange and learn from us in a respectful way. By taking up *curanderismo*, Santería, shamanism, Taoism, Zen and otherwise delving into the spiritual life and ceremonies of multi-colored people, Anglos would perhaps lose the white sterility they have in their kitchens, bathrooms, hospitals, mortuaries and missile bases. [...] Let us hope that the left hand, that of darkness, of femaleness, of "primitiveness," can divert the indifferent, right-handed, "rational" suicidal drive that, unchecked, could blow us into acid rain in a fraction of a millisecond. (*Borderlands* 90–91)

Parts of this argument, especially reading it more than thirty years after *Borderlands's* publication, will be familiar to many observers. Indigenous critiques of "museumification"; properly historicized analyses of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Western art, such as the "primitivism" of Paul Gauguin's Polynesian paintings, the "cubism" of Pablo Picasso's African-inspired works, and the "jive talk" seemingly depicted in Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha"; and even more recent popular arguments against "cultural appropriation" all have made the point that white artists, curators, and consumers should not "copy" the aesthetics of "tribal cultures" without proper attribution—and should not profit from a (disrespectful) "commercial use" of the designs or creations of people of color. But there is much more to Anzaldúa's speaker's critique in this passage. "What is missing," she believes, from indigenous or minority arts appropriated by a dominant culture, is not so much the "credit" or the compensation that artists of color are owed; it is the "power" of the properly contextualized "performance ritual," of the *spirituality*, that these arts evince when we engage with them as living, communicating beings not in an "alien system" but in a shared environment.

Unlike many of her colleagues (and other critics), Anzaldúa, along with her mestiza speaker, *wants* white people—all people—to "take up" indigenous and diasporic American, African, and Asian artistic and spiritual practices, but to "do it in the right way."²⁶ In fact, in earlier drafts of this section of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa's speaker explicitly points out that "many people of color object to white people taking up Santería" and the rest, whereas she does not: "I say let them assimilate our beliefs, our rituals, our vital red blood that will give the dying planet a booster shot," she remarks, "unless" they are "unprincipled cultural vampires" who fail to respect the complex locational and spiritual qualities of these practices they adopt. Indeed, "the half-breed, mulatto, the Chicano, and the queer exist at this time in human history" to prove—through the "blending" that created them and that they enact—"that all blood is intricately woven together and that we are spawned out of similar souls. Besides, we're all in this together. Juntos" (Anzaldúa, "Dominion" 14, "Early" 19–21).²⁷ In other words, this sophisticated critique of cultural appropriation sets aside the issue of

²⁶ This claim (about how anyone can "take up" santería and so forth, effectively challenges Moya's postpositivist realist reading of *Borderlands* as a text that embodies and advocates for performances, practices, and styles that are *specific to* (and *caused by* the lived experience of) "women of color."

²⁷ This language is largely transposed to the later ("*La conciencia de la mestiza* / Toward a New Consciousness") section of *Borderlands*: "The *mestizo* and the queer exist at this time and point on the evolutionary continuum for a purpose. We are a blending that proves that all blood is intricately woven together, and that we are spawned out of similar souls. [...] Many feel that whites should help their own people rid themselves of race hatred and fear first. I, for one, choose to use some of my energy to serve as mediator. I think we need to allow whites to be our allies. Through our literature, art, *corridos*, and folktales we must share our history with them so when they set up committees to help Big Mountain Navajos or the

property (or possession, or capitalistic profit), instead focusing on *propriety* (or participation, or non-capitalistic “exchange”). All people should be able to reap the benefits of the powerful spirituality that emerges in properly located communal discourse, but in order to do this, we must live and act ethically. Here, all the elements of *ethos* come to the fore: ethics, spirit, ritual, location, art, communication, and community. It is the “‘rational’ suicidal drive” of much of Western aesthetics that Anzaldúa and her speaker hope to attenuate, replacing it with a (queer-of-color) “vital,” spiritual, and ethical undertaking.

Sheila Marie Contreras, among other observers, has criticized *Borderlands* for presenting indigeneity primarily “in the chronicles of mythology, folklore, and personal anecdote, rather than in material history or in a contemporary moment” (54).²⁸ While I agree with Contreras that *Borderlands* largely avoids depictions or analyses of “the relations between Chicanas/os and Native Americans” in *material* history, I do think the text frequently situates indigeneity “in a contemporary moment” (52).²⁹ In my view (and, I believe, in the view of *Borderlands*’s speaker), “mythology,” “folklore,” and “anecdote” have just as much to do with the present as with the past, and they are no less important than the “material” as components of history. In fact, as Contreras later points out, one of the major claims in *Borderlands*’s critique of “western aesthetics” is that an overemphasis on the “material” is damaging: the passage on cubism, surrealism, and *curanderismo*, Contreras explains, “romanticizes Indigenous communities as the source of spirituality needed to counterbalance the *materiality* of the West. ‘White’ culture is finally not only ‘cut off’ from its ‘spiritual roots,’ but might very well have none left to reclaim as Anzaldúa locates the sites of rejuvenation forever outside a Western cultural context” (64, my emphasis). Because, as we have seen, the rhetoric of *nos/otras* demands dwelling in multiple cultural spheres simultaneously, it is simply not the case that the spiritual practices *Borderlands*’s speaker highlights remain “forever outside” the Western context in which a “white” subject might encounter indigenous American (or other mostly non-European) arts. Furthermore, Contreras’s account seems to suggest that the “spiritual” (or the mythic) is necessarily a “romanticized,” dehistoricized, and unserious literary or cultural mode of expression, whereas it is in fact a quite historicizable mode—within the realm of *ethos*—that Anzaldúa, Keating, and many other writers take very seriously.³⁰ The relationship between the material and the spiritual is in many ways analogous to the relationship between property and propriety: the former is more physical, and has

Chicano farmworkers or *los Nicaragüenses* they won’t turn people away because of their racial fears and ignorances. [...] Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. By taking back your collective shadow the intracultural split will heal. And finally, tell us what you need from us” (107–08). That the prose shifts from the third-person and the more militant to the second-person and the more obliging is no accident; as I explain below, it is a microcosm of the narrative, rhetorical, and tonal movement of *Borderlands* on the whole.

²⁸ For other critiques of *Borderlands*’s approach to indigeneity, see Saldaña-Portillo and A. Smith.

²⁹ At one point, Contreras argues that too many critics “overlook Anzaldúa’s treatments of *indigeneity*, which is itself a return to *origins* and thus does not easily align with theories of hybridity or anti-nationalism” (Contreras 51, my emphasis). I certainly agree that more critics should focus on *Borderlands*’s treatments of indigeneity, but I do not understand why indigeneity *must* be conceived as misaligning with hybridity or anti-nationalism. The relationship between hybridity and nationalism is the center of one of the most vital debates in (especially North American) indigenous studies today (see, e.g., Justice, especially pp. 338–43, 8n). Furthermore, Louis Owens’s theory of “indigenous motion” and Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “transmotion” illuminate the ways in which indigenous subjectivities and practices do not remain mired in a rooted standpoint of “origins” but, in fact, create routed confluences in the present (Owens 161–83; Vizenor).³⁰ On the historicity and seriousness of the spiritual, see Keating, “Shifting”; Lioi; and Vizenor. It is also striking that Contreras reads *Borderlands*’s speaker’s “schemata,” in this passage on western aesthetics, as “a reversal of the binary in which all of the attendant assumptions about female subjectivity, such as diminished rationality and heightened sensuality, are refigured as the positive and unique aspects of women’s knowledge” (58). In my view, the supposed rationality/sensuality binary is quite like the supposed *logos/pathos* binary, obscuring the vital role of *ethos* both in *Borderlands* and in the world at large.

more to do with ownership and commodity fetishism, whereas the latter is more discursive, and has more to do with attitudinal dwelling and ethical exchange.

Whether *Borderlands* succeeds in treating indigenous arts and cultures *appropriately* and ethically is up for debate—and I agree with Contreras that we must be careful not to have “our literary understandings of Chicana/o identity and history” rely “upon dominant European and Euro-American narratives of the Indian in the Americas” (65–66).³¹ At the same time, we should acknowledge the moves *Borderlands* makes to bring us away from questions of (and to avoid any claims to) artistic and cultural *property*. The book’s ideas surrounding “cultural appropriation” go well beyond the notion that “[t]he ‘right’ way to borrow culture, apparently, is to acknowledge the desire to escape or remedy the diminished spiritual state” (Contreras 64). Wanting to flee or alleviate one’s deficiency of spirit is not enough; one must, as Anzaldúa’s speaker puts it, genuinely “share and exchange” ideas and practices, “learn from” and participate in a community’s rituals and performances, “delv[e] into the spiritual life and ceremonies” of others. The ethical way is not to borrow or steal from—but to *dwell in*. Within the framework of *nos/otras*, it becomes harder to appropriate the culture of “others,” both because the schema is non-proprietary and because these “others” are understood to be *a part of* “us” (and vice versa).

If *Borderlands*’s “western aesthetics” passage appears to retain the “us versus them” mentality that Anzaldúa and her speakers attempt to overcome (it distinguishes “Whites,” “themselves,” and “their spiritual roots” from “our own people” and “our spiritual art objects”—and then it suggests that “whites could allow themselves to share and exchange and learn from us”), it nevertheless makes a shift in its conclusion. The “us” in “Let us hope” and in “could blow us into acid rain in a fraction of a millisecond” is a different, more expansive “us”—an “us” that extends beyond “people of color” to include all cohabitants of the planet.³² In the following chapter, we will explore in greater depth the question of “who we are” and “who we should be.” It is precisely a question of “the ethical way,” wherein we ask ourselves: How do our modes of communicating with one another perennially construct and reconstruct a collective sense not of what we believe is proprietary (or “ours” in the possessive sense)—but of what we believe is “appropriate,” “ours” in the evaluative and expressive sense? Let us, *nosotras*, find out.

³¹ I do not wish to suggest that *Borderlands* always treats indigeneity “appropriately”—and I agree with several of Contreras’s, Saldaña-Portillo’s, and A. Smith’s critiques of the book along these lines. If a number of indigenous readers or audiences view *Borderlands*’s speaker’s treatment of their arts and practices as unethical or disrespectful, rather than as forms of genuine dwelling, she will have failed to meet the requirements of her own philosophy. Chicana literature, rhetoric, and politics must work hard not to perpetuate acts of colonialism. Still, the shift from *property* to *propriety* that Anzaldúa’s speaker advocates in *Borderlands* has not been appreciated fully, and so I wish to examine it in this chapter.

³² It is striking how often Anzaldúa’s and her speakers explicitly mention a planetary frame for symbolic, spiritual, and artistic communication. Instances in *Borderlands* include the speaker’s claim that “*all countries are mine* because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. [...] I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a *new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet*” and her similar remark that, “[b]eing the supreme crossers of cultures, homosexuals have strong bonds with the queer white, Black, Asian, Native American, Latino, and with the queer in Italy, Australia and *the rest of the planet*” (102–03, 106, emphases mine).

Chapter 4

Ethos as Ethics: How The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Asks Us Who We Are and Who We Should Be

Introduction

So far, we have examined *ethos* as consubstantiality, *ethos* as spi/rituality, and *ethos* as composition. Let us return now to what is perhaps the most “intuitive” understanding of rhetorical *ethos*—especially in the Aristotelian sense of the term. When we think of “character,” we often think of it in terms of what is “good” or “right”—that is, in *ethical* terms. A person of character, or a person who demonstrates character in her speech, is one who exemplifies the good and shows goodwill toward others. In first elaborating the appeal of rhetorical *ethos*, Aristotle explains, “[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others], on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt.” He goes on to say that “it is not the case, as some of the handbook writers propose in their treatment of the art, that fair-mindedness [*epieikeia*] on the part of the speaker makes no contribution to persuasiveness; rather, character is almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion” (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 1.2.4).

Ethics are not codified rules passed down from on high, like laws or religious doctrines. Rather, they are the codes that a community articulates, debates, agrees upon, navigates, and then redefines over time. It is possible, then, to understand ethics broadly, in terms of “anything that characterizes” a particular place or community. As we saw in the previous chapter, Martin Heidegger argues that “ethics” is “that which ponders the abode of man” (234–35). In moving, however, from a discussion of *ethos* as composition—the communication of *location*—to a discussion of *ethos* as ethics, I want us to return to the more “evaluative” matters that the term *ethics* typically conjures. What is it that we value, how do we exhibit our values, and how do we communicate in a way that emphasizes what we together believe is right, is good, is ideal? As opposed to articulating what and where *we already are*, how do we articulate what—and how—we believe *we ought to be*?

One could argue that scholarship and social theory that addresses hierarchical imbalances—in comparative ethnic and indigenous studies, feminist and queer studies, Marxist critique, disability studies, and so forth—already tends to root itself in inquiries about ethics. Even if these approaches do not often converse directly with the scholarly and philosophical *field* that calls itself “ethics” or “moral philosophy,” an underlying question in many of these approaches is the question of how human societies have come to value certain persons, groups, and identities over others; how we have normalized or justified the hierarchies we have developed; and how we might rethink and disrupt these hegemonies, if we come to believe that they are not aligned with our truest values at the moment. If settler colonialism remains the governing principle of the United States—where structural racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and so on also remain the norm—what does this reality convey about our own ethics and values, and what responsibilities might we have to work toward reshaping our shared “dwelling place”?

Within literary studies, the subfield of “ethical criticism” converses quite regularly with the established field of ethics or moral philosophy, while also approaching literary texts in a particularly narratological way. Rarely, however, do we find analyses that take up the questions of ethics, of rhetorical *ethos*, of literature, and of minority subjectivity together. What will we find when we look closely at the artistic expressions of minority speakers—expressions that work, in a particularly

literary way, to *question* and also to *exhibit* the ethics and values that we believe we ought to hold? That is the task of this chapter.

I have chosen to focus our inquiry on Sherman Alexie's 2007 young adult novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The book may be "Alexie's novel," but it is also the "diary" of a fourteen- and fifteen-year old indigenous student named Arnold Spirit, Jr., who lives in a low-income household on the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington and who speaks with a stutter and a lisp as a result of the hydrocephalus he had at birth. Junior (as Arnold likes to be called) tells us he was born on November 5, 1992—almost exactly 500 years after Christopher Columbus made landfall in the "New World." If the European Columbus's *Diario* takes us through the beginnings of colonization in the Americas, the indigenous Junior's *Diary* takes us through his freshman year of high school in the settler-colonial U.S., as he transfers from Wellpinit (the greatly under-resourced school on the reservation) to Reardan (a much-better-resourced high school in the nearly all-white farm town 22 miles away).

When it comes to *ethos* and ethics, the *Diary* begs to be analyzed, discussed, and critiqued for a wide variety of reasons. It is deliberately intersectional, dwelling on a large number of overlapping hierarchical imbalances in contemporary U.S. society: it addresses settler colonialism, race, and indigeneity; it illuminates both social expectations and individual performances of masculinity and homosociality; it reveals the effects of poverty and rural life; and it showcases unequal treatment based on age and (dis)ability. Since its publication more than ten years ago, the *Diary* has proven to be both massively popular and critically acclaimed, winning the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and remaining a staple of school syllabi around the country. Accordingly, it is a very *public* contemporary text, circulating to a large number of readers, and so our discussion of it always already concerns, at once: the ethics that emerge "in the book itself," the ethics that emerge in our own society (a portrait of which the book paints), and the ethics that emerge in our own current *discussion* of the ethics of the book and of our society. Put somewhat differently: "how we express ourselves" is at once something that the *Diary* depicts and exhibits, something that we can analyze about our society, and something that we *are doing* when we analyze the expressions of the *Diary* and of our society.

If the *Diary's* many awards, sales, syllabus appearances, and readings speak to the great value we have placed on the book, we should also recognize how widely and vociferously the book has been *banned* and *censored*: it has appeared on the American Library Association's Top Ten Most Challenged Books list more often than any other book in the past decade, clearly indicating that a massive number of parents, school boards, and librarians find the novel ethically deficient, out of step with "our" principles, or unworthy of value. How, from the perspective of *ethos* and ethics, do we reconcile the *Diary's* great popularity and acclaim with its great censorship and censure? Most importantly, the novel proves a useful case study for us because its *form* and *narration* directly concern, and even emphasize, ethical questions: about the relationship between speech and disability, about adults' power over young people, about toxic masculinities and internalized homophobias, about addictions, and about the differences in norms and expectations across different locations. In taking a closer look at the *Diary*—both at the "text itself" and at the way it has been and continues to be received—we might begin to learn a great deal more about who we are and who we should be.

On Disability: From the *Ethos* of "Social Patterns" to the *Ethos* of "Expression"

The opening line of the *Diary* brings disability immediately to the foreground of the text. "I was born with water on the brain," Junior writes. He goes on to tell us, "I have all sorts of physical problems that are directly the result of my brain damage," including headaches, nearsightedness in

one eye and farsightedness in the other, a susceptibility to seizures, and the development of ten extra teeth (*Diary* 2–3). By opening his diary with these lines, Junior draws attention to elements of his being that are entirely outside his control. His disabilities, as well as his “atypical” physical characteristics, are not things he has chosen—and so they do not themselves demonstrate anything about his *ethos*. On the other hand, what Junior chooses to *say* about these things, *how* he chooses to say it, and how others choose to interpret both his disabilities and his utterances all have an immediate bearing on *ethos* and ethics. As Aristotle explains in the *Poetics*, “Character (*ethos*) is that which reveals choice, shows what sort of thing a man chooses or avoids in circumstances where the choice is not obvious, so those speeches convey no character in which there is nothing whatever which the speaker chooses or avoids” (6.2.4). My own elaborations on *ethos* as a mode of consubstantiality, spi/rituality, and com-position in Chapters 1 through 3 conceive of *ethos* a bit more expansively than we have it here, but in our current focus on *ethos* as *ethics*, this definition serves us well.

Much more recently, ethical critics have followed Aristotle to conceive of *ethos* and of literary ethics in precisely these terms of choice and constraint. In his 1988 book *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Wayne Booth remarks, “I express my ethos, my character, by my habits of choice in every domain of my life, and a society expresses its ethos by what it chooses to be” (8). Similarly, in her 1990 book *Love’s Knowledge*, Martha Nussbaum argues that literature “is deep, and conducive to our inquiry about how to live, because it does not simply (as history does) record that this or that event happened; it searches for patterns of possibility—of choice, and circumstance, and the interaction between choice and circumstance—that turn up in human lives with such a persistence that they must be regarded as *our* possibilities” (171).¹ If, as Nussbaum claims, literature “searches for patterns of possibility,” we can understand literature’s ethical dimensions in terms of *what it depicts*: how does a novel, say, reveal the “circumstances” that its narrator and characters are born into or forced to contend with, and what actions do these (human) subjects “choose” to take within such circumstances? Booth’s formulation approaches these questions from a slightly different angle. In talking about how a human or a society “expresses its ethos,” he gets us to think about the ethics of literature in terms of *how it depicts*: what are the *formal* and *stylistic* “choices” that a speaker or (implied) author makes in his narration, and what do they reveal about his personality, goodwill, and ethical code? Given my focus throughout this project on *ethos* as a rhetorical mode, I want to insist once again that we pay special attention to the “expressive” elements of literature. At the same time, I want to argue in this chapter that the texts that most fully exemplify *ethos* as ethics are those that are primarily *about* ethics—those whose narrators choose *to dwell on* the choices that we and others make in our society, as well as where these choices lead us. Alexie’s *Diary* is a prime example.

As an ethical narrator, when Junior explains some of the ways his disabilities have intersected with poverty, racism, and colonialism, he continues to illustrate what is outside his control while also critiquing the choices that those with more agency have made. For instance, he tells us that he had to have all ten of his extra teeth “pulled *in one day*,” because “the Indian Health Service funded major dental work only once a year”—and, even more appallingly, his “white dentist believed that Indians only felt half as much pain as white people did, so he only gave us half the Novocain” (*Diary* 2). Without needing to say explicitly that the U.S. federal government, which determines annual funding for the Indian Health Service, should have chosen to allocate more money to that division (or that the Service should restructure its dental plans), Junior calls attention to the inequitable health care that most American Indians receive. Likewise, his white dentist’s choice to give indigenous patients “half the Novocain,” a choice that leads directly to more agonizing oral surgery, is not only an

¹ See also Banita (especially pages 17–18).

unethical decision; it is an unethical decision that, much more broadly, is *characteristic* of the way that non-Native people treat Indians in contemporary U.S. society.

Bringing together Nussbaum's interests in social "patterns" with Booth's interests in "expression," Junior quickly shows us how his health and disabilities inform the way he communicates with others. "I also had a stutter and a lisp," he remarks.

Or maybe I should say I had a st-st-st-st-stutter and a lisssssssthtththtp.

You wouldn't think there is anything life threatening about speech impediments, but let me tell you, there is nothing more dangerous than being a kid with a stutter and a lisp. [...]

I'm not even writing down this story the way I actually talk, because I'd have to fill it with stutters and lisps, and then you'd be wondering why you're reading a story by *such a retard*. (*Diary 4*, italics original)

Here, Junior provides a deeply honest account of his own "speech impediments," which result from his hydrocephalus and isolate him as a target for (unethical) bullying by his peers. His unique ways of speaking aloud also have a deep connection to his diary writing and other modes of artistic expression. By writing out "a st-st-st-st-stutter and a lisssssssthtththtp," he allows his readers to see the difference between the "cleaner" prose on the pages of his diary and the way he "actually talks" in person.

This is the beginning of a process that young-adult-literature scholar Mike Cadden has called "ethical" narration—one in which the narrator regularly displays "self-consciousness and self-questioning," engaging with "multiple and ideologically contrasting perspectives" (149, 146). This mode of expression comes in contrast to what Cadden (following both Booth and Mikhail Bakhtin) views as a manipulative form of narration typical of young adult novels, in which "an adult writer speaks through a young adult's consciousness to a young adult audience" with seemingly no heteroglossia—that is, without ever calling attention to the multiplicity of viewpoints, speakers, and voices that any professional literary critic (and any "canny reader," to use a term of Gayatri Spivak's) will know a novel contains (Cadden 146, Spivak 22). For Cadden, any novel whose narrator is a teenager and whose "real-life" author is an adult inherently involves "a top-down (or vertical) power relationship" based on age; the author of such a novel therefore has an ethical responsibility to showcase both artistry and perspectival diversity—to hint at the author-narrator distinction and to present "opposing ideologies" in the plot (146). I will add that the uneven nature of social power relationships—not only those based on age alone, but also those based on (dis)ability, race, class, sexuality, and gender—is itself the primary *focus* of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. I will return to the question of the ethics of the "real-life author" (in this case, Sherman Alexie) toward the end of this chapter, but for now I want to take seriously the idea that the narrator is his own distinct being and to concentrate on the ethics of *his* narration—the way in which Junior expresses himself on the page, calling attention to heteroglossia and to the question of how we handle uneven power relationships in our society.

In the opening pages of the *Diary*, as we have seen, Junior makes clear the layers of his own artistry, is honest about his social positioning, and respects his readers' intelligence and ability to question the way young people with disabilities are treated by their peers. His comment "*Or maybe I should say I had a st-st-st-st-stutter and a lisssssssthtththtp*" discloses a different possibility for voice and narration—a different direction in which he, the writer and artist, could have gone. It shows the power of writing, as opposed to embodied speech, for those with speech impediments: on the page, Junior can better control the sounds and pacing of his verbal expressions. At the same time, Junior's narration makes sure *not to fully mask* the "impediments" themselves: the particular sounds and

durations of his stutter and lisp are there, at least for the moment, for all to see and hear. Likewise, his claim that, if he were “to fill” the *Diary* with stutters and lisps, “then you’d be wondering why you’re reading a story by *such a retard*” simultaneously indicts those readers and listeners who would treat a stutterer and lisper with disrespect while playfully honoring those readers who can acknowledge that they’re in on the joke—who can see the multiple layers of Junior’s verbal artistry and who can join him in critiquing the all-too-common tendency for teens to call a stutterer a “retard.”

As Dorothy Hale points out, in an article on “New Ethical Theories of the Novel,” the conception of the “competent literary reader” shared by numerous scholars concerned with literary ethics (Booth, Spivak, Judith Butler, and Lynne Huffer, among others) is a reader who can discern the text’s multiple layers, voices, and viewpoints—who “knows how to read ‘as if’” (199). Such a reader “can occupy the position prepared for her by the text by accurately decoding (affectively and morally) the values implied in specific and concrete narrative choices”; this reader also knows not to confuse the text’s “dominant moral value” with “any partial value represented by the text—say through statements made by characters and narrators” (Hale 200).² While most ethical critics, like Hale and her interlocutors, focus their analysis on the readerly and the scholarly (on how we can read ethically and write ethical *criticism*), I am more interested in the speakerly and the narratorial (on how artists and narrators like Junior can compose ethically and write *literature* about ethics). A speaker’s *ethos*, then, is among other things an ethical mode of expression that both allows the type of reading that Hale discusses above *and* that dwells at length on issues like bullying people with disabilities, administering less Novocain to indigenous patients, and failing to listen to the voices of young people. With his heteroglossic narration, Junior challenges us to make ethical choices: Do we want to call him “a retard”? Do we agree that he should receive only half the standard anesthetic dose? Do we continue reading his *Diary*?

Not only does Junior’s narration regularly reference multiple “ideologies” and voices; it also features multiple *modalities*, consistently interspersing verbal expression with pictorial art. He tells us that he draws cartoons “because words are too unpredictable,” “too limited” in their ability to communicate all his ideas—and he puts a great number of these cartoons on the pages of his *Diary* for us to view (5). As a number of scholars have pointed out, multimodal literature, especially the kind written for young people, often works better than conventional narrative at reaching and captivating diverse readers: readers for whom (“standard”) English is not a first language, readers with disabilities, and readers who themselves regularly communicate in multimodal fashion are especially likely to benefit from a verbal-and-pictorial narrative like Junior’s (Atkins-Goodson, Insenga, Krashen, Serafini et al.). Accordingly, Junior’s narration both works to reach a wider audience and represents what seems to be a more empowering mode of expression for him.

Communicating through cartoons allows Junior, a stutterer and a lisper, to convey messages in a less restrictive way. “I feel important with a pen in my hand,” he tells us (*Diary* 6). However, as with his spelling out of “st-st-st-st-stutter,” his cartoons do not completely obscure his speech impediments. In *Diary*’s first cartoon, Junior depicts himself bowlegged, somewhat cross-eyed, with a speech bubble that reads “Th-th-the RAIN in THPAIN...” (5). Readers familiar with the musical *My Fair Lady* will recognize the allusion to the scene where the phoneticist Professor Henry Higgins attempts to teach Eliza Doolittle to pass as “a lady” by breaking her Cockney accent and pronouncing “the rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain” as a “proper” Londoner would (Kertzer

² It is worth noting—and I will discuss this issue further below—that respecting the reader’s ability to discern the difference between a novel’s “dominant moral value” and the various “partial values” that it represents is precisely what *censors* of works like *Diary* fail to do. These respondents, unlike Junior (and Alexie), do not believe that the young reader (often their own child) is capable of making such distinctions.

67). By making this allusion, and depicting his own “improper” speech patterns on the page, in a cartoon, Junior communicates to his audience in a characteristically multilayered style: this moment in *Diary* is multimodal, intertextual, ekphrastic, heteroglossic, dissonant. Hegemonic social codes suggest that a stutter, or a Cockney accent, be hidden if at all possible—yet, despite Junior’s clear ability to hide his unique speech patterns behind drawings and “standard English” type (and his claim that he’s “*not* writing down this story the way I actually talk”), he chooses to present his stutter on the page once again, giving us “ME IN ALL MY GLORY.”³

As Amanda Haertling Thein and Mark A. Sulzer point out, “the narrative layers in Alexie’s novel compete” (52): at this particular moment, when Junior presents us with his first of many cartoons, his multilayered style illuminates both normative views of how a person “should speak” and a critique of these views from a disability lens. Thein and Sulzer emphasize a different, though deeply related and intersecting, dimension of *Diary*’s heteroglossic narration: the competing layers in Junior’s expression, they note, highlight “both *dominant views of youth* and unique challenges to those views that provide real readers with spaces for interpretation and questions” (52, my emphasis). In line with Cadden’s conception of “ethical” narration, Junior’s *ethos*-driven rhetorical style features opposing voices and perspectives, thereby encouraging us to think more deeply about the ways that adults treat youth (especially indigenous youth, youth of color, poor youth, and youth with disabilities) in our society.

At his new, almost entirely white, high school in Reardan, Junior raises his hand in class for the first time when his geology teacher, Mr. Dodge, says something Junior knows to be incorrect. In a sentence that smacks us over the head with the colonial place-names of the Pacific Northwest, reminding us that the U.S. indeed remains a colony, Junior explains that Mr. Dodge “was talking about the petrified wood forests near George, Washington, on the Columbia River, and how it was pretty amazing that wood could turn into rock” (*Diary* 84). What follows is a rich and illuminating exchange, full of the stilted speech patterns and the humor—at once indignant and self-deprecating—that characterize Junior’s narrative voice. Embedded in the passage is a great deal of ethical commentary on schooling, on normative assumptions about indigenous youth, and on *naming*: on who has the authority to name things, and on how the names they choose are frequently misleading and noxious.

“Uh, er, um,” I said.

Yeah, I was so *articulate*.

“Spit it out,” Dodge said.

“Well,” I said. “Petrified wood is not wood.”

My classmates stared at me. They couldn’t believe that I was contradicting a teacher.

“If it’s not wood,” Dodge said, “then why do they call it wood?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “I didn’t name the stuff. But I know how it works.”

(*Diary* 84)

As he does elsewhere in the *Diary*, Junior sets up a contrast between the “inarticulateness” of his in-person verbal expressions and the “knowledge” that he—like many fellow stutterers, like many kids

³ As Bryan Ripley Crandall points out, the juxtaposition of Junior’s verbal diary writing with his cartoons “can be used to initiate further interpretations and conversations about how students perceive others who are not like them, especially individuals with disabilities”—and the *Diary* uses Junior’s indigenous “heritage, as well as his disabilities, to take issue with how educational divisions often partition American schools” (71–72). This “taking issue” about an “American” problem is precisely what I am attempting to explore in this chapter on *ethos*-as-ethics.

who don't speak "proper" English, like a girl with a Cockney accent—nevertheless has and wants to convey. His (white) classmates cannot believe he is contradicting his (white adult) teacher, who himself refuses to believe that an Indian kid from the reservation knows much about geology. That Junior knows how "petrified wood" works but cannot explain why "they" misleadingly "call it wood" gets us to question the ethics involved in naming and classification. Why do they call the city near the petrified wood forests "George, Washington"? Why do they call the river passing through it "the Columbia"?

Junior, in all his "inarticulateness," continues to interrogate such nomenclature, while also explaining the geology of petrified wood to an increasingly frustrated Mr. Dodge:

Dodge's face was red.

Hot red.

I'd never seen an Indian look that red. So why do they call us the redskins?
"Okay, Arnold, if you're so smart," Dodge said, "then tell us how it works."

"Well, what happens is, er, when you have wood that's buried under dirt, then minerals and stuff sort of, uh, soak into the wood. They, uh, kind of melt the wood and the glue that holds the wood together. And the minerals sort of take the place of the wood and the glue. I mean, the minerals keep the same shape as the wood. Like, if the minerals took all the wood and glue out of a, uh, tree, then the tree would still be a tree, sort of, but it would be a tree made out of minerals. So, uh, you see, the wood has not turned into rocks. The rocks have replaced the wood."

Dodge stared hard at me. He was dangerously angry: "Okay, Arnold," Dodge said. "Where did you learn this fact? On the reservation? Yes, we all know there's so much amazing science on the reservation." (*Diary* 84–85)

Mr. Dodge reveals himself to be less interested in facts and knowledge, less interested in having his students learn, than he is in maintaining authority. It is an authority that teachers are presumed to have over students, that adults are presumed to have over teenagers, that white Americans are presumed to have over Indians, that "articulate" speakers are presumed to have over stutterers, and that off-the-rez town dwellers are presumed to have over those who live on the reservation. It is the authority that allows some people to call others "redskins," to call minerals "petrified wood," and to name cities, states, and rivers things like "George, Washington," and "Columbia." With his *ethos*-driven narration, Junior does not explicitly tell us that this is how authority is structured, or that his geology teacher's interests primarily lie in retaining this authority; instead, he leaves it up to his readers to decide whether we want to be interpellated by Mr. Dodge's "we" in the sarcastic phrase "we all know there's so much amazing science on the reservation"—or if, instead, we want to give a young indigenous student like Junior just as much credence (if not more) as we would to an older white teacher like Mr. Dodge. If we follow the rhetorical theory of Aristotle (whose philosophy, in so many other obvious cases, is not supportive of a kid like Junior), we should care much more about a speaker's "fair-mindedness," goodwill, and character than about his elocution. That Junior's geological commentary is studded with "extraneous" words and phrases like "uh," "er," "sort of," "like," and "I mean" need not prevent us from listening to him and taking him seriously. This kid from the reservation knows his science.

Luckily, one person in the classroom shares these priorities and realizes that Junior knows his geology. Despite being surrounded by numerous snickering, finger-pointing classmates and an antagonistic teacher, a white student named Gordy—"the class genius"—raises his hand and confirms that Junior "is right about petrified wood" (*Diary* 86). For Mr. Dodge, Gordy's comments, unlike Junior's, are worthy of attention and respect. As Junior narrates, in hindsight:

Mr. Dodge thanked Gordy, but didn't say another word to me.
 Yep, now even the teachers were treating me like an idiot.
 I shrank back into my chair and remembered when I used to be a human
 being.
 I remember when people used to think I was smart.
 I remember when people used to think my brain was useful.
 Damaged by water, sure. And ready to seizure at any moment. But still
 useful, and maybe even a little bit beautiful and sacred and magical. (*Diary* 86)

At this point, Junior's narration is more didactic: he essentially tells us outright that his teacher and the majority of his new schoolmates are mistreating him, dehumanizing him, insulting his intelligence. He also precedes these comments with an explanation of how things tend to work in rural America: "Mr. Dodge wasn't even a real science teacher. That's what happens in small schools, you know? Sometimes you don't have enough money to hire a real science teacher. [...] And that's why small-town kids sometimes don't know the truth about petrified wood" (*Diary* 86). These statements are, of course, all about *ethos*. In his narration, Junior is dwelling on that which is *characteristic* of particular locations—of U.S. towns like Reardan. He also is raising questions about the ethics of teacher-student, adult-teen, and white-indigenous relations.

Even if Reardan is much better resourced than the Wellpinit reservation when it comes to schoolbooks, extracurricular facilities, and dollars allocated to each student, it is not always better resourced when it comes to *human* interaction. On the reservation, people see Junior as "a human being," a "smart" kid with a "useful" and "beautiful and sacred and magical" brain. This last part—which has more to do with the spiritual and the symbolic—suggests a model for how we can treat others ethically. As always, Junior keeps disability in mind, mentioning his hydrocephalus and its after-effects: his brain has been "damaged by water" and can "seizure at any moment." Of course, these facts don't make his brain any less commendable. As the *Diary* progresses, with Junior acclimating to Reardan, he can lament less and less the sense that "people *used* to think" he "was smart." An important reason for this change is Gordy, who defends Junior here in geology class and who increasingly recognizes the young narrator's beautiful, sacred, magical, and useful brain.

On Homosociality and Homophobia: The Ethics of Queer Expression

Appreciating Gordy's goodwill toward him, Junior hopes to spend more time with Gordy—to become close to him. Junior expresses this desire, both to Gordy and to his *Diary* readers, in a way that regularly raises ethical questions about homosociality between young men, about common performances of masculinity, and about structural homophobia in the U.S. All of these questions constitute a major element of the *ethos* that Junior mobilizes in his conversations and narrations: he wants to be good toward others, to have others be as good as they can be, and to have his audience think more deeply about what kinds of goodness are disallowed by normative practices of masculinity and homophobia. "I want us to be friends," he tells Gordy.

Gordy stepped back.
 "I assure you," he said. "I am not a homosexual."
 "Oh, no," I said. "I don't want to be friends that way. I just meant regular friends. I mean, you and I, we have a lot in common."
 Gordy studied me now.
 I was an Indian kid from the reservation. I was lonely and sad and isolated and terrified.

Just like Gordy.
 And so we did become friends. Not the best of friends. Not like Rowdy and
 me. We didn't share secrets. Or dreams.
 No, we studied together.
 Gordy taught me how to study.
 Best of all, he taught me how to read. (*Diary* 94)

That Junior's announcement of his desire to "be friends" with Gordy results in Gordy's physically stepping back—and declaring that he is "not a homosexual"—indicates a normative expectation, in their eastern Washington milieu, that young men avoid overt expressions of physical and emotional intimacy. Junior clarifies that he is not interested in a sexual relationship, but in a "regular" friendship based on "common" interests and experiences. His explanation, to the readers of the *Diary*, that what bonds Gordy and him together is their shared condition of being "lonely and sad and isolated and terrified"—rather than a shared condition of being "Indian kids from the reservation"—foreshadows several later scenes in *Diary* where Junior comes to understand the notion of a "tribe" as a communion based not just on ties of ethnicity or blood but also on ties of occupation and experience. For instance, when Gordy later tells Junior that "weird people still get banished" from various social communities, and the two teens agree that they are both "weird people" themselves, Junior announces to his friend:

"So we have a tribe of two."
 I had the sudden urge to hug Gordy, and he had the sudden urge to
 prevent me from hugging him.
 "Don't get sentimental," he said.
 Yep, even the weird boys are afraid of their emotions. (*Diary* 132)

As before, Gordy expresses (what Junior understands to be) a fear of physical and emotional intimacy with another young man. Junior's "Yep" here calls attention to the dialogue he is having with his *Diary* readers: he wants us to know that this moment in the narrative is especially invested in social critique and ethical commentary. What kinds of shared interests and experiences bring young men closer together—and what kinds of normative attitudes and expectations work at the same time to keep them apart?

It is not a coincidence that Gordy is the one who teaches Junior "how to read." As readers of the *Diary*, we can understand the places in the text where "reading" is explicitly discussed as requests for us to pay special attention. Despite his seeming unwillingness to be intimate with another young man, Gordy explains to Junior that one should read a book first for the plot, second for the history, and third "because really good books and cartoons give you a boner" (*Diary* 96). He gets extremely excited when articulating this point to Junior, who at first is somewhat skeptical. "You should get a boner! You have to get a boner!" Gordy yells (*Diary* 97). The two teens run to their high school library and realize the vast wonder and mystery that its thousands of books contain. Gordy asks Junior:

"Now doesn't that give you a boner?"
 "I am rock hard," I said.
 Gordy blushed.
 "Well, I don't mean boner in the sexual sense," Gordy said. "I don't think
 you should run through life with a real erect penis. But you should approach each

book—you should approach life—with the real possibility that you might get a metaphorical boner at any point.” (*Diary* 97)

Despite Gordy’s “blushing” at the moment when Junior doubles down on the “boner” metaphor (should another young man say he’s “rock hard” in Gordy’s presence?), the excitement that Gordy feels as he shares this experience with Junior parallels the excitement that he gets out of “really good books and cartoons.” Ultimately, the thing that Gordy believes should give Junior a boner is an idea and a practice to which Gordy has just introduced him. If good books and cartoons give both young men “boners,” how are we, the readers of *Diary*, supposed to interpret a cartoon that Junior draws (on page 117) of Gordy excitedly reading a book? This cartoon—which comes immediately after Junior’s verbal narration that, “In his own way, Gordy the bookworm was just as tough as Rowdy”—conveys an admiration that one young (male) writer and cartoonist has for a young (male) reader, who himself in this moment is admiring a piece of writing (*Diary* 116). The sexual metaphor that Gordy came up with to describe his admirations of art appears in the caption of this drawing. On how many levels, and through how many layers, is the “metaphysical boner” that Junior mentions in the bottom-right corner of his cartoon operating? How would Gordy teach us to read this work of art? As always, Junior’s rhetorical expressions to his readers are quite self-aware: they draw attention to their own artistry, raising ethical questions about craft itself and about the social relationships between humans.

Junior mentions “Rowdy,” as a figure of comparison and contrast to Gordy, both at this moment in *Diary* and in the earlier moment (that we saw above) when we learn that Junior and Gordy “did become friends. Not the best of friends. Not like Rowdy and me.” If Junior depicts an admiration for Gordy through his cartoon illustrations, he does the same thing with Rowdy—an act that some folks in their eastern Washington community find a bit unsettling. Having transferred to Reardan, upsetting his best friend back home on the reservation, Junior hopes to repair their relationship by giving Rowdy a gift that conveys just how much he cares for his buddy. The gift is “a cartoon of Rowdy and me like we used to be” (*Diary* 102). This illustration visually depicts the kind of horizontal power relationship whose exact opposite is the “top-down (or vertical) power relationship” that Cadden described to us earlier, when commenting on the age disparity between adults and youth. With an “R” for Rowdy and an “A” for Arnold on their respective superhero suits, Rowdy and Junior stand on equal footing, and their power emerges from their togetherness, their fusion of hands (and souls), their shared interest in making the world a better place.⁴ Not coincidentally, Junior at one point considers adding Gordy to the mix: “Or maybe Rowdy, Gordy, and I could become a superhero trio,” he tells us, “fighting for truth, justice, and the Native American way. Well, okay, Gordy was white, but anybody can start to act like an Indian if he hangs around us long enough” (*Diary* 131). This last caveat is crucial, as it simultaneously suggests that “the Native American way” is the way of truth, justice, and ethical living while making clear that non-Indians should be involved (and are welcome) in the “fight.”

An important thing to fight for, it appears, is the destigmatization of queer and homosocial bonds between humans, whether youth or adult. And the intricate homosociality (perhaps approaching homoeroticism) of Junior’s cartoons, which constitute an artistic stand in this fight, is

⁴ This same form of composition can be found in the final cartoon of *Diary*, in which Junior and Rowdy jump into Turtle Lake while holding hands (218). In their reading of this final cartoon, Christa Preston Agiro, Christine Quiblat, Claire Preston, and Kineta Sanford note that its caption (“Boys can hold hands until they turn nine”) provides “an excellent springboard for students” to explore queer theory and to ask, “How are homosocial bonds explored and defined in the text? How are our friendships defined by and limited by binary understandings of gender?” (25).

not lost on Rowdy's father. Junior asks him if Rowdy is home so that he can receive his cartoon gift. When Rowdy's father lies, replying that Rowdy isn't home, Junior says:

“Oh, well, I drew this for him. Can you give it to him?”

Rowdy's dad took the cartoon and stared at it for a while. Then he smirked.

“You're kind of gay, aren't you?” he asked.

Yeah, that was the guy who was raising Rowdy. Jesus, no wonder my best friend was always so angry.

“Can you just give it to him?” I asked.

“Yeah, I'll give it to him. Even if it's a little gay.”⁵

I wanted to cuss at him. I wanted to tell him that I thought I was being courageous, and that I was trying to fix my broken friendship with Rowdy, and that I missed him, and if that was gay, then okay, I was the gayest dude in the world. But I didn't say any of that.

“Okay, thank you,” I said instead. “And Happy Thanksgiving.” (*Diary* 103)

There is quite a bit of contrast between the language Junior uses in his communication with Rowdy's father and the language Junior uses in his narration to his readers. There is also, of course, a great deal of contrast between the opinions that Junior holds and the opinions that Rowdy's dad holds of the cartoon, as well as of homosociality and homosexuality more largely. For Rowdy's father, the cartoon's depiction of intimacy between two young men earns a long stare, a “smirk,” and some hesitation about whether to give something “a little gay”—composed by a teen who seems “kind of gay”—to his own son. For Junior, on the other hand, the cartoon represents courage, apology, friendship, and love, all of which are good things, whether they're “gay” or not.

That an adult in his community cannot recognize all of this goodness, or who finds it a bit concerning, frustrates Junior deeply. Even though he chooses not to “say any of that” to Rowdy's father, he says all of it to his *Diary* readers, providing ethical commentary on the effects of structural homophobia and normative expectations of young men's behavior. Rowdy's father's homophobic positions, Junior believes, lead directly to Rowdy's being “always so angry”—and at this moment they lead to Junior wanting “to cuss at him.” Are the courage, friendship, and love that Junior expresses toward Rowdy worth stymying just because they're “a little gay”? If Junior “didn't say any of that” to Rowdy's father, what he *did* say instead is still quite telling. He says “thank you” to Rowdy's father, ending with “Happy Thanksgiving.” What does it mean to give thanks, even under these restrictive and unfortunate conditions? What does it mean for a young “part-time Indian” to say “Happy Thanksgiving” to an older Indian man, given the common (and certainly skewed) historical memory of “the first American Thanksgiving” as a moment when Pilgrim settlers and Natives “looked past their differences” to break bread?

Importantly, the top-down power relationships that we see in *Diary*—between an adult and a teen Spokane here, or between a white male teacher like Mr. Dodge and an indigenous student like Junior—do not *necessarily* result in clear expressions of homophobia, toxic masculinity, racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, or other related structures of unethical behavior. The homophobia that Rowdy's father conveys cannot simply be chalked up to “a generational divide.” Junior is quite careful, in his narration to his readers, to point out that some “elders” are models for ethical living. If “Indians have gradually lost all of their tolerance” “ever since white people showed up and brought along their Christianity and their fears of eccentricity,” Junior's grandmother is an

⁵ Are these two sentences what a (mildly or moderately) homophobic parent should say—rather than a censorious “No, I won't give it to him. It's too gay.”—when making a decision about whether their son should read the *Diary*?

exception: she “had no use for all the gay bashing and homophobia in the world, especially among other Indians” (*Diary* 155). Although the terms that Junior uses to describe the injuries of settler colonialism can be oversimplified at times, and prone to essentialisms, he is wrestling with large and interesting questions about the ethics of top-down power relationships more broadly. Within the context of the U.S.’s long colonial history, and its structural norms of homophobia and ableism, the *ethos*—the ethical “tolerance” and “spirit”—that Junior’s grandmother maintains is especially commendable. He elaborates:

Indians used to be forgiving of any kind of eccentricity. In fact, weird people were often celebrated. Epileptics were often shamans because people just assumed that God gave seizure-visions to the lucky ones. Gay people were seen as magical, too. [... Nowadays] Indians can be just as judgmental and hateful as any white person. But not my grandmother. She still hung on to that old-time Indian spirit, you know? (*Diary* 155)

As we have seen, “eccentricity” is what Junior believes he shares with Gordy: their common weirdness is what makes them “a tribe of two.” In this commentary on the history of American Indian beliefs and cultural practices, Junior deliberately mentions disability and queerness as qualities that can be “celebrated” just as much as they can be maligned. Furthermore, these are all qualities with which Junior himself identifies: we know that his hydrocephalus makes him susceptible to “seizure activity,” and he is comfortable saying that, if actions like drawing appreciative cartoons of one’s (same-gender) best friend are “gay, then okay, I was the gayest dude in the world.”

While there are certainly social pressures and environmental norms that might make it nearly impossible to “choose” one’s beliefs, attitudes, or comments about epileptic and gay people, Junior’s grandmother somehow bucks the trend, still hanging on “to that old-time Indian spirit.” Taking her as a model, Junior wants to buck the trend himself—to make more ethical choices about how to interpret and interact with disability, queerness, race, class, and so forth—and his narrative asides (“you know?”) regularly ask us, his *Diary* readers, to consider doing the same. The *ethos* of Junior’s narration calls attention to both the unethical and the ethical courses of action that characters take: it dwells at length on ethical matters in the *Diary*’s “plot.” This dwelling is itself an ethical course of action, and the narration works rhetorically and stylistically to practice the “good” in a number of distinct ways, including queer verbal and visual depictions of friendship.

On Forgiveness and Ethical Relativism: “A Whole Other Set of Mysterious Rules”

When one is closer to the “bottom” of the social scale—a young and poor indigenous kid with a disability, for instance, or an elderly indigenous woman on the reservation—it can be hard to say “thank you” in the face of insulting remarks, to forgive those who hurt you, or to spend time attending to ethical questions in detail. Once again, though, Junior’s grandmother is a model for practicing the “good.” Junior shocks his *Diary* readers with the sudden revelation that his grandmother was walking home from a mini powwow when she struck and killed by a drunk driver. In her final moments of life, she says aloud, “Forgive him” (*Diary* 157). Junior devotes quite a bit of space in his *Diary* to communicate to his readers just how noble and ethical he finds his grandmother’s final expression to be. “Wow,” he tells us.

My grandmother’s last act on earth was a call for forgiveness, love, and tolerance. She wanted us to forgive Gerald, the dumb-ass Spokane Indian alcoholic who ran over her and killed her.

I think my dad wanted to go find Gerald and beat him to death.
 I think my mother would have helped him.
 I think I would have helped him, too.
 But my grandmother wanted us to forgive her murderer.
 Even dead, she was a better person than us. (*Diary* 157)

Junior's explicit use of the term "better person" is a microcosm of his desire throughout his *Diary* to focus his narration on the ethics of actions and relationships. "Forgiveness, love, and tolerance"—concepts presented somewhat abstractly at this point in the book—emerge elsewhere in more concrete examples: Rowdy forgives Junior for leaving the reservation school and transferring to Reardan, for instance, and Junior gives thanks to Rowdy's dad despite a homophobic response to the superhero-duo cartoon. Furthermore, this passage in the *Diary* illuminates environmental norms and hazards that make ethical living especially challenging. Gerald's alcoholism, an addiction not at all unusual on the Spokane reservation, makes it harder to drive safely and responsibly. The desire that Junior and his parents have to "beat him to death"—to exercise physical violence in response to insult and injury—is a common one in the Wellpinit community. How do we go about mitigating, circumventing, or overcoming these norms and hazards, so that we can be "better people"?

In Wellpinit, Junior shows us, fistfights are tied up with performances of masculinity and are, among young men, typical and expected forms of handling personal disagreement. When Junior first upsets Rowdy with the news of his imminent transfer to Reardan, Rowdy turns away from him, and Junior narrates the events that ensue:

I touched his shoulder. Why did I touch his shoulder? I don't know. I was stupid.
 Rowdy spun around and shoved me.
 "Don't touch me, you retarded fag!" he yelled.
 My heart broke into fourteen pieces, one for each year that Rowdy and I had
 been friends.
 I started crying. (*Diary* 52)

The question mark in Junior's narration—along with the acknowledgment that his shoulder-touching was a "stupid" decision—makes it clear that he knew very well what to expect from his action. In Wellpinit, the unwritten yet widely understood rules of engagement between young men say that touching the shoulder of a friend who's turned away from you is improper and will result in a shove. Junior's crying and his admission that his "heart broke into fourteen pieces" both illustrate the damaging effects of physical and verbal attacks and register a tonal contrast between the expressions of the two teens. Junior's words and body language are far less macho than Rowdy's, and we have seen how resistant Junior tends to be toward his environment's expectations of "manliness" in its indigenous men.

Nevertheless, Junior provides his *Diary* readers with plenty of scenes in which he himself succumbs to performances of toxic masculinity. At his new school in Reardan, he encounters a popular white student named Roger, who tells him an especially profane and offensive joke:

"Did you know that Indians are living proof that niggers fuck buffalo?"
 I felt like Roger had kicked me in the face. That was the most racist thing I'd
 ever heard in my life.
 Roger and his friends were laughing like crazy. I hated them. And I knew I
 had to do something big. I couldn't let them get away with that shit. I wasn't just
 defending myself. I was defending Indians, black people, *and* buffalo.

So I punched Roger in the face. [...]

He got to his feet and walked away. His gang stared at me like I was a serial killer, and then they followed their leader.

I was absolutely confused.

I had followed the rules of fighting. I had behaved exactly the way I was supposed to behave. But these white boys had ignored the rules. In fact, they followed a whole other set of mysterious rules where people apparently DID NOT GET INTO FISTFIGHTS.

“Wait,” I called after Roger.

“What do you want?” Roger asked.

“What are the rules?”

“What rules?”

I didn’t know what to say, so I just stood there red and mute like a stop sign. Roger and his friends disappeared.

I felt like somebody had shoved me into a rocket ship and blasted me to a new planet. I was a freaky alien and there was absolutely no way to get home. (*Diary* 64–66)

Earlier, when Rowdy called him a “retarded fag,” Junior described the outcome of that verbal attack in rather physical terms, saying that his heart “broke into fourteen pieces.” He continues that pattern here, explaining to his *Diary* readers that Roger’s racist remark felt like a “kick in the face.” An appropriate counterattack, then, would be precisely what Junior gives Roger: a “punch in the face.” According to the norms of Wellpinit that Junior is used to, a remark like Roger’s will always result in a response like Junior’s. Roger’s joke is a “big” offense, which deserves a “big” reaction, since Junior should be expected to defend himself, “Indians, black people, *and* buffalo.” What Junior quickly learns, however, is that “the rules” of his new Reardan environment are totally different from those of Wellpinit. He even explains this experience of confusion and surprise in the same terms of physical attack that he used before: it’s as if someone has “shoved” him into a rocket and “blasted” him to “a new planet,” whose norms and ways of life he does not understand.

Importantly, what Junior and his *ethos*-driven narration are doing here is illuminating the complexity, the relativism, and even the toxicity of what constitutes “ethical” behavior. By punching Roger in the face, Junior “had behaved *exactly the way [he] was supposed to behave*,” according to the “rules” of Wellpinit. Wellpinit expects its indigenous young men to express machismo and physical violence, corrosive as these expressions may be. In contrast, Reardan has “a whole other set of mysterious rules” that say fistfights between young men are unacceptable, whereas multiply racist jokes are customary. As the *Diary* progresses, it becomes clearer and clearer that the fact of cultural differences in habit and behavior is not meant to *excuse* the violences that a young man like Junior or Roger expresses. This realization is part of Junior’s learning process, wherein he seeks to become a “better person,” like his grandmother. Even in this scene with Roger, we see the learning process in action: that Junior tells Roger to “wait” and explicitly asks, “What are the rules?” suggests that he truly hopes not to mistreat his peers. He is willing to forgive Roger for the deeply offensive joke, and the experience of living in multiple environments (on multiple “planets,” as he says it feels) teaches him—and then his *Diary* readers—that what is normal or expected is not always *right*. While *ethos* can be understood in terms of habit, custom, and familiarity, it can also be understood in terms of “*good* character,” “fair-mindedness,” and benevolence.

On Sexism: Objectification, Harassment, and the Author/Narrator Distinction

One habit or custom that appears to transcend the environmental divide is the objectification of girls and women, particularly young white women. Junior exhibits this tendency in multiple parts of the *Diary*, at one point praising himself for his skills at masturbation and telling his readers that, for him, “*Naked woman + right hand = happy happy joy joy*” (26). When he falls for a young white woman named Penelope at his new Reardan school, he finds himself constantly “thinking about her breasts”; in contrast, she tends to be “a really good friend” to Junior, thinking not about his body but “about my whole life. I was the shallow one” (*Diary* 127). Although, at this moment, Junior recognizes his shallowness and admits it to his readers, he never appears to leave his objectifying tendencies behind. Perhaps surprisingly, when he emails Rowdy for advice on how to handle his feelings for Penelope, Rowdy replies, “I’m sick of Indian guys who treat white women like bowling trophies. Get a life” (*Diary* 115). Gordy soon corroborates Rowdy’s point, telling Junior that “people care more about beautiful white girls than they do about everybody else on the planet”; when one pretty white girl named Cynthia disappeared in Mexico the previous summer, everyone was up in arms, yet “over two hundred Mexican girls have disappeared in the last three years in that same part of the country,” and almost no one seemed to care. By fetishizing Penelope, Junior appears to be, as Gordy puts it, “just a racist asshole like everybody else” (*Diary* 116). To be sure, there are important lessons that Junior learns here—and perhaps many of his readers are learning these lessons as well. Both the fetishization of young white women and the disregard for the lives of indigenous and Latina women are normative lapses in ethical behavior. To dwell on the effects and consequences of such fetishization and disregard is to take a first step in becoming “a better person,” but it is far from sufficient. Tellingly, this sequence in the *Diary* comes immediately after a passage in which Junior comments on his penchant for gawking at Penelope. He tells us:

Mostly I loved to look at her. I guess that’s what boys do, right? And men. We look at girls and women. We *stare* at them. [...] Was it wrong to stare so much? Was it romantic at all? I don’t know. But I couldn’t help myself.

Maybe I don’t know anything about romance, but I know a little bit about beauty.

And, man, Penelope was crazy beautiful.

Can you blame me for staring at her all day long? (*Diary* 113)

On the one hand, we can read this passage as a brutally honest self-critique. Junior draws attention to his own questionable behavior, and he recognizes that many others likely will view it as “wrong” (and thoroughly unromantic). On the other hand, we can read this passage (and the passages that ensue) as a lazy rhetorical and artistic act wherein Junior never fully contends with his own ethical lapses. He evidently fails to answer his own questions—settling on a response of “I don’t know,” an excuse of “I couldn’t help myself,” and a claim that this stuff is just “what boys do”—before deferring to his readers, asking us if we can “blame” him for it. Can we?

That these questions Junior is asking us are *about* ethics is obvious. Whether or not *the asking* of these questions is itself “an ethical act” is less clear. As the readers of the *Diary*, we at this moment are quite explicitly hailed as judges of the speaker’s character: we are the “you” with the power to “blame” (or not to blame) the speaker. So, I will posit that we should view it as our task to evaluate the speaker and his ethics, based on his choice of words. For Aristotle, this process is what rhetorical *ethos* is all about: Do we, the audience, find the speaker to be “fair-minded”? Does he “say things in such a way as to make him worthy of credence?” Do his words enable us to call him “one

of us”—and not just that, but do his words enable us *also* to call him “a person of *good* ethical character”?

In *The Company We Keep*, Booth argues that any real-life author has an ethical responsibility to “attempt to write fictions that require the creation of the cleverest, wisest, most generously committed ethos imaginable” (128). This created *ethos* need not be embodied by a novel’s narrator, who in some cases might be unreliable by design. But the figure that Booth calls “the implied author”—not the book’s real-life author, but the created being with whom we readers should understand ourselves to be in conversation, from the novel’s very beginning to its very end, regardless of which narrator or character might *also* be speaking to us at any given point—is supposed to be as ethical and as *ethos*-driven as possible.

Part of what makes *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* such an interesting text for exploring the “ethics” components of rhetorical and literary *ethos* is the relative *lack* of clear distinctions between its narrator (Junior), its implied author, and its “real-life” author (Sherman Alexie). To be sure, Junior’s narrations are diary entries that he writes purely over the course of his freshman year of high school, whereas Alexie penned the novel in his late thirties and early forties. Yet the novel began as a section of Alexie’s family memoir, and *many* of its sentences—“I was born with water on the brain,” for instance, or “I hoped and prayed that [my reservation and my tribe] would someday forgive me for leaving them”—could come as nonfictional claims from Alexie himself (Margolis, “Song of Myself” 29). I will always maintain, as I have up to this point in the chapter, that we should treat a novel’s narrator as a being distinct from the author (whether “real-life” or “implied”), and I will say more in a minute about the importance of this distinction to ethical criticism. At the same time, the cases where these distinct speakerly beings plainly *bleed into* one another—where what a novel’s narrator says to us could be precisely what its real-life author says to us; where a narrator *is* a writer and an artist, of a cartoon-filled “*Diary*,” say—provide special opportunities for us to think about the *ethos* and the ethics of literary expressions.

A novel, a poem, or a play, according to Booth, is always superior to—its implied author is, to use Junior’s phrase, “a better person” than—the real-life artist who has penned it. Using somewhat oddly universalist language, Booth explains:

Everyone knows that the character implied by the total act of writing any literary work (the implied author) is always (but always) an “improved” version over the flesh-and-blood creator—not necessarily improved by your standards or mine, but improved by the standards of the author. The split between the two is shocking when it is wide and when the real writer is for any reason notorious; we are all distressed when we learn that “our” Robert Frost, inferred from the poems—wise, kindly, companionable, earthy—could in private be a cad and a bounder, and a cosmopolitan sophisticate at that. (*Company* 254)

Considering a book like the *Diary*—where the intersecting matters of disability, indigeneity, queerness, youth, poverty, and other socially marginalized subject positions are consistently in the foreground—enables us to ask somewhat different questions than Booth does here, with his example of Robert Frost. How likely is it, in the first place, for a young Native narrator with a disability (or “our” perception of an older Native author who also was born with hydrocephalus) to come off as “wise, kindly, companionable, earthy” to a massive group of literary readers? Probably not likely at all. Yet this unlikeliness is what makes the *Diary* so remarkable: seemingly against anyone’s expectations, the book, its narrator, and its author (implied and real) all have been incredibly popular, widely acclaimed by critics, and viewed as “relatable” by swathes of readers both young and old. This is where things get interesting. Who is “our” Sherman Alexie, inferred from the

Diary, and how “wide” is the “split” between this figure and the “real” Sherman Alexie—or between both those Alexies and Junior?

In an interview immediately following the *Diary*'s publication, the “real” Alexie appears to agree with Booth's claim that the novel's overall ethical “character” is an “improved” version of its “flesh-and-blood creator.” Referring to Junior by his given name, Alexie says, “Arnold is me. Well, he's twice as smart and funny as I was at the same age. But he's largely an autobiographical character” (Davis and Stevenson 189). What the *Diary* is meant to be, Alexie continues, is “a funny, moving tale” that nonetheless enables “all those folks, Indian and not, who celebrate me to realize that they are also celebrating the fact that I left the rez. All of my books and movies exist because I left” (Davis and Stevenson 189). Who and what is worthy of our celebration? This large question—which the “real” Alexie raises here and which the “smarter and funnier” Junior consistently explores in the *Diary*—is the essence of *ethos*'s “ethics” dimension. What acts are worthy of praise or blame, how do we go about making such a determination, and how do we express ourselves with continual “fair-mindedness”—the “wisest, most generously committed” character possible?

Booth also makes it a point to say that “artists often imitate the roles they create. The writer is moved, in reality, toward the virtues or vices imagined for the sake of the work itself. To dwell with a creative task for as long as is required to perform it well means that one tends to *become* the work—at least to some degree” (*Company* 128). The “real” author, the implied author, and in many cases the narrator of a work bleed into one another. Given these observations, in addition to the fact that Junior is “largely an autobiographical character” of Alexie's, we who are interested in the ethics and *ethos* of literary expressions should return to several overlapping questions, giving careful consideration to each:

- (1) Since Junior essentially exists *only in his own Diary narration*, and since Aristotle tells us that a speaker's *ethos* emerges “from [his] speech” alone, to what degree can we say that Junior is “fair-minded”? Does he exhibit, throughout the *Diary*, goodwill toward his audiences? Does he speak in such a way as to make himself worthy of credence?
- (2) How fair-minded, ethical, or good of a person is “our” Sherman Alexie?
- (3) How much, and in what particular ways, do these two speakers (Junior and “our” Alexie) bleed into one another?
- (4) To what degree are these two speakers worth our “celebrating”? Should we continue reading, listening to, and analyzing their artistic expressions?

We already have explored many of the dimensions of Junior's *ethos*-driven narration: his calling attention to the construction of his own verbal and visual art, his explorations and expressions of disability and youth, his critiques of racism and colonialism, and his questions about the typicality, expectedness, and goodness of certain (masculine) behaviors. While a number of readers will disagree, so many others can sensibly conclude that Junior's narration reveals him to be thoughtful, fair-minded, and benevolent—an ethical person, one who exhibits good character. This readerly conclusion can hold true even if some elements of Junior's expression reveal ethical weaknesses, such as his objectification and fetishization of young women. Everyone has flaws. And if we readers derive “our” Sherman Alexie from the *Diary* alone—or from the *Diary* and a few (or even all) of Alexie's other literary works—we might come to think of our Alexie in the same way we think of Junior, as a largely fair-minded and benevolent artist.

But if, as Booth says, “we are all distressed when we learn” that “our” author—who, over the course of our encounter with his literary works, emerges as such a thoughtful, companionable, benevolent figure—“could in private be a cad and a bounder,” we have plenty of similar reasons to be perturbed when it comes to Alexie. On March 5, 2018, NPR reported that ten different women had spoken to their reporters about Alexie, alleging “behavior ranging from inappropriate comments both in private and in public, to flirting that veered suddenly into sexual territory, unwanted sexual

advances and consensual sexual relations that ended abruptly. The women said Alexie had traded on his literary celebrity to lure them into uncomfortable sexual situations.” One of the three women who came forward on the record, poet and teacher Jeanine Walker, summarized her experience with Alexie as “a story about power, and abuse of power” (Neary). One day, Walker explained, she and Alexie met to play basketball at a court in his office building. Afterward, she went to change her clothes in a restroom in his office. Walker narrates the scene:

When I turned around he was right behind me, and just like physically very much in my space. And leaned toward me and said, “Can I kiss you?” I said no and backed away, and he kept moving forward and was like, laughing and smiling and sweaty and whatever, and he said, “It’s just, we’re playing basketball, you remind me of the girlfriends I had in high school.” And I just said, “Well, we’re not in high school, Sherman.” (Neary)

Walker’s account, in addition to the many other recent accounts by women of Alexie’s unethical behavior, indeed paints a picture of an author who can “in private be a cad and a bounder.” In public, the author might appear a much “better person”—and in literary publications, “our” author might *be* a much better person. But to what degree is the implied author of the *Diary* a different person from the “real” Alexie? A related question: to what degree is the Alexie in Walker’s account a different person from *Diary*’s narrator, Junior? I agree with Booth’s position that “[t]o damn a book because of what is said about the author in the Sunday supplements is ‘unethical’ ethical criticism indeed. And it is to fail in our responsibility to the implied author of *this tale*” (*Company* 151, italics original). But, if we are thinking seriously about *ethos* and ethics, what do we do when the accounts in reputable newspapers and public radio bear a great deal of resemblance to the accounts in the author’s literary works?

Basketball, at the center of Walker’s account, is also a central theme in the *Diary*. Junior plays on both the Wellpinit and the Reardan high school basketball teams, and the novel ends with the scene of a pick-up game between him and Rowdy, in which they “didn’t keep score” (*Diary* 230). As we know, Junior also admits that he loves to “stare at women” and that he stares at the “crazy beautiful” Penelope “all day long”: he says that he can’t help himself—and that this is “what boys do, right? And men.” Once we are aware of the accounts like Walker’s, this passage in the *Diary* is likely to produce a different reading, one that makes many readers grimace or cringe. Can we understand Junior’s overall *ethos* as worthy of celebration and credence, once we hear these things about Alexie? It is worth remembering that, in Aristotle’s theorization, the construction and effectiveness of a speaker’s *ethos* should have nothing to do with “a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person.” *Ethos* emerges “from the speech itself,” and so the things that Junior or Alexie might say and do *outside* the narration of the *Diary* cannot properly be understood as having any bearing on the rhetorical *ethos* that the *Diary* develops. This position is in many ways like the New Critical or postmodernist insistences that what lies outside a literary text, or what the “real” author says and does, should not be things that we “read for” when we read the text and derive meaning from it. Yet Junior, in the text of the *Diary*, *does say* that he can’t help staring at young women like Penelope for hours on end, and he does ask us if we can “blame” him for doing so. These statements are unquestionably up for grabs in our readerly interpretation, critique, and ultimate judgment of Junior and his *ethos*. It is up to us, and he even indicates that it is up to us, to make such decisions about the ethics he practices. And our decision-making in this regard is itself an ethical practice.

If it seems improper to judge Junior (in any given reading of the *Diary*) based on judgments we make about Alexie (prior to that given reading of the *Diary*)—and I agree with Aristotle, with

Booth, and with the many other narratological critics who comment similarly on the author/narrator and artist/artwork splits that this move would be improper—what we then might ask is: can we judge Alexie based on judgments we make about Junior, about the *Diary*, or about other texts-in-themselves that bear Alexie’s name on their covers? Some critics would argue that doing so would lead us definitively outside the realm of literary criticism, since at that point we would be examining not only a work of literature but also a “real” person, and perhaps we do not have the proper training to make such an examination. Others would answer “no” or “not really” to my question, because Junior and Alexie are different and autonomous beings: Junior’s *ethos* is not Alexie’s *ethos*, and conflating the two would be like judging a father based purely on the actions of his son (or his many children). I find this answer of “no” or “not really” quite convincing. Walker’s own statement, both to Alexie and to the public, that “Well, we’re not in high school, Sherman,” is especially illuminating here. In the *Diary*, we *are* in high school. Junior is a freshman in high school. When he wrote the *Diary*, Alexie was not in high school. He also was not in high school when he allegedly harassed the ten women who spoke to NPR. The adult/teen distinction matters here, as it has throughout this chapter, because we typically have different ethical expectations of young people—not only because they “have not matured” to adulthood but also because they are positioned at the lower end of the “top-down (or vertical) power relationship” that Cadden describes. If, as Walker says, we are dealing with “a story about power, and abuse of power,” Junior is much less likely than Alexie to be in positions where he has the authority to abuse.

On Banning and Censorship: The Ethics of Listening, Avoiding, and Silencing

All of this leads to our final question. Should we continue reading, listening to, and analyzing the artistic expressions of those who have abused or transgressed, provided that we otherwise find the artworks very compelling? In the era of #MeToo and Time’s Up, when survivors of harassment and assault are speaking out with greater fervency about their experiences with unethical harassers and assailants, this question has resurfaced with greater interest and has led to a vital and important debate. For the purposes of our discussion here, I will set aside the issues of “coerced” readings and financial gain (should instructors *require* that students read X and Y books? Should we *buy* X or Y books—or tickets to see their authors at festivals and readings?) and will focus instead on the larger question of whether we should *read* and examine the artistic works composed by artists who we firmly believe to be unethical.

In an October 11, 2018, essay for *Vox*, Constance Grady tackled this question by interviewing, and reading the work of, several critics of literature and culture. On the one hand, *The New Republic*’s Josephine Livingstone followed Roland Barthes to argue for a feminist reading of films whose directors allegedly and avowedly have preyed on young women: “I consider Woody Allen and Roman Polanski’s movies gifts, to me and to the culture—even when they’re bad—and I’m never giving them back,” Livingstone wrote. “I don’t want Allen and Polanski to have control over their own legacies or even over their own works. If they don’t get to dictate how I interpret their films, then they don’t get to control anything about the film industry. We, the viewers, do” (Heer). Especially when it comes to films, Grady points out, we the viewers can greatly deemphasize the power of the “auteur” (or the “lead actor” who “carries the film”) and shift our appreciation instead to the many other “real” people involved in the filmmaking process: the various other actors, screenwriters, art directors, costume designers, cinematographers, and so forth.

Could we take a similar approach with a novel like *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*? The composition and publication of that book, of course, involved the work of so many “real” people other than Alexie: the illustrator, Ellen Forney; the editor, Jennifer Hunt; the book designer, Kirk Benshoff. It is worth remembering that, if we choose not to read the *Diary* any

longer, we are choosing not only to set Alexie's art aside but also to set these many other contributors' work aside. We might also follow Livingstone to decide that we will continue to engage with artworks by unethical artists—but to do so with a critical lens, wherein we remember and acknowledge the transgressions of the artist and think carefully about their relationship to the art itself. (One could say that I have taken this approach throughout this chapter, attending to the *ethos* and the ethics of the *Diary*, of Junior, and of Alexie—a process that requires that I read the novel and read it critically.)

On the other hand, as Amy Hungerford has pointed out, “a scarce resource is at stake” whenever we make decisions about what books to read or not read: “the reader's time, and, by extension, the attention that could be paid to any number of other books among the throngs that will always remain unread.” Hungerford herself has chosen no longer to read or assign the work of David Foster Wallace, in part because she believes his writings manipulate readers “in ways that are structurally similar to the way he manipulated the women in his life” (Grady). Soon after the allegations of harassment by Alexie went public, a number of readers and writers have made the same kind of decision, vowing to stop reading or assigning his books and to spend time reading other artists' work instead (Laban; Reese; Spanke).

While I very much respect this position, I do want to go back to, and unpack, what Booth told us earlier about how our damning a book on account of “what is said about” the flesh-and-blood author constitutes a “failing in our responsibility to the implied author of *this tale*.” We already have seen how other “real” people involved in an artwork's creation (illustrators, editors, art directors, and so on) can be affected adversely by our decision to damn or forgo that artwork. But I want to follow Booth here to take very seriously, once again, the idea that Junior—in the *Diary*—is himself a *person* who is autonomous and different from Alexie and whose verbal and visual artistic expressions will also be totally ignored if we all decide to stop reading the *Diary*. A number of observers will disagree with my full-blown humanization of Junior, or my insistence that he and Alexie are substantially distinct, while many other observers will agree with these characterizations of mine and yet have no problem making the decision to dispense with the *Diary*. Nevertheless, I believe a case can be made that it is unfair to Junior to ignore him purely because of what one of his creators has done. We (adults) might very well be silencing a disabled indigenous teenager simply because a totally different (adult) person did some unethical things.

This case is one that Junior in many ways makes himself, throughout the *Diary*. Rowdy's father frequently expresses homophobia, and Penelope's father frequently expresses racism, yet Junior listens to them—and writes about them—anyway, while also making it clear that we should not conflate these parents with their children. Furthermore, Junior shows us how adults often act unethically when they ignore the contributions and concerns of teenagers—or when they actively try to limit the things that teenagers say and do. Accordingly, Junior's *Diary* narrations anticipate the responses that many readers (and non-readers) have had to the *Diary*: that it should not be read, or that it should even be *banned* from certain classrooms, libraries, bookstores, and school districts, because it conveys “unethical” messages or conveys messages in “an unethical way.” As I said before, I respect the decision that a number of commentators have made, not to read the *Diary* or other works by Alexie any longer—but I believe we will be on a slippery slope indeed if and when we decide to translate this kind of individual readerly decision into a cultural mandate. To ban the *Diary* from cultural institutions (as many people and entities already have done) is to undermine freedom of expression and to adjudicate all too strictly “from above” what texts, ideas, and attitudes we believe are worthy or unworthy of value.

Booth himself is quite aware of this danger. “Few questions can be more important today,” he writes, “than whether or how a democratic society should protect its citizens from harming themselves, without harming them more seriously by infringing upon their freedoms.” By “taking

ethical issues seriously,” he continues, “we can diminish the likelihood of two kinds of oppression: by the overtly censorious who see no problems with censorship, and by ourselves as we risk imposing unacknowledged critical pieties” (*Company* 27). If some people openly acknowledge their desire to censor a book, and explain their reasons for doing so, others of us who might claim to be “anti-censorship” should recognize the ways in which we still diminish and reject certain works (and people) while heralding others.

Every year, the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom publishes a list of the Top Ten Most Challenged Books in the U.S. Between 2010 and 2018, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* appeared on the list seven separate times—more than any other book. All of this lasting reaction came to a novel that received the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature and a Boston Globe–Horn Book Award, among many other accolades; that has been a staple of high school and college syllabi around the country; and that kept its place on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list for several years in a row. The reasons for the bans, in both libraries and schools, are numerous, ranging from its depictions of masturbation, racism, alcohol, and gambling to its “vulgarity” and “anti-Christian content” (Johns). All of these bans occurred before the allegations of harassment by Alexie were made public, and the director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, Jamie LaRue, predicts that the allegations will present even more challenges to Alexie’s work and speech. LaRue himself believes that it would be “a very dangerous proposition” to give people permission to censor a book because its author “did something wrong,” though he acknowledges that not everyone in the American Library Association agrees with him on this matter (Maher). Nonetheless, the Association’s official collective position, published as their “Freedom to Read” statement, asserts: “No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.” All of this matters in a discussion of *ethos* because *ethos* is at once about the “character” of a speaker (whether a narrator, an implied author, a flesh-and-blood author, or anyone else); about the “dwelling place” in which we live together; about the cultural codes by which we live; and about the ethics of our choices, including our choices of what to read, what to write, and how to express ourselves.

Furthermore, as Alyssa D. Niccolini argues, banned books (or books that a number of readers, for whatever reason, feel the desire to censor) might be especially valuable in educational settings: we can learn a great deal from such books because they “shake up expectations, challenge norms,” and “often raise topics that don’t yield easy answers, such as addressing racism, dealing with systemic or physical violence, or navigating the complexities of sex and sexual identities” (27). It is precisely because books like the *Diary* emphasize *ethos* in its ethical sense that we should explore our society’s own ethics and expressions of *ethos* by engaging with them. The American Library Association speaks as a national body and for this reason takes seriously the question of how and by what means a “society of free people can flourish.” Booth, in *The Company We Keep*, takes largely the same position. As we have seen, he too speaks of “a democratic society,” its “oppression” and its “freedoms,” ultimately concluding that “by taking thought about *who* and *where we are*, and about *when it is*, we may improve our chances of finding and dwelling with those others who are in fact our true friends” (488–89). With whom do we forge consubstantiality? How do we experience our collective spirit? What are the particular norms, qualities, and idiosyncrasies of our dwelling-place? How do we arrive at our beliefs about what is good, what is bad, and how we should be?

On Dwellings to Build and Buildings to Dwell In: Our *Ethos*, Our Ethics

Assuming that we have an ethical responsibility not to *ban* or to *censor* all but the most violent expressions (“artistic” or not) in our society, what ethical responsibility do we have in terms of

handling the variety of expressions we allow? Booth ends *Company* by settling on “the rhetorical or pragmatic choice of a critical pluralism—a pluralism with limits” (489). We should do our best to listen to even those speakers who “look initially dangerous or worthless,” and then, if “after keeping company with them” for some time, we conclude that they will be regularly harmful, we can “cast them off” (*Company* 489). Ultimately, Booth leaves it “to each reader to practice an ethics of reading that might determine” which standards of decision-making “should count most, and just which of the world’s narratives should *now* be banned or embraced in the lifetime project of building the character of an ethical reader” (*Company* 489, my emphasis). If this concluding remark seems to hem and haw—to waffle between descriptions of individual choice and of collective conduct—that’s because it does. Just as Junior learns in the *Diary* that “the rules” and norms of behavior can change across spaces, Booth recognizes that our standards of decision-making can change over time: what “should *now* be banned or embraced” can alter, over the course of a “lifetime” or many lifetimes. By leaving the decision-making *about our decision-making* “to each reader,” Booth in fact is refusing to “ban” (or even to thoroughly “embrace”) any particular text, author, genre, period, or field from his readers’ life narratives. His singular and indefinite “an” in his phrase “the character of an ethical reader” indicates that each ethical reader is unique, that there are many different styles of and approaches to ethical reading, and that the only constant among them is that “character,” or *ethos*, is something they actively work to “build.”

What I want, at last, to reiterate is that “character,” or *ethos*, is in fact a mode that all readers build for themselves (*as* ethical readers and speakers) and that they *also* build in their conceptions of other agents (the “implied authors” of, the flesh-and-blood authors of, the narrators of, and the other speakers in the texts they read). That the “literary” work of reading, speaking, and writing extends beyond the realm of literature itself (as “literature” is conventionally understood) should be obvious. How do we construct a notion of, and how do we interpret, the *ethos* of a person who speaks to us in the flesh? How do we construct an *ethos* in our own everyday modes of speaking and writing?

What both Booth’s conclusion and Junior’s *Diary* narration challenge us to do is to take what we learn from reading one narrative and to apply these insights (however we wish) to the narratives that we tell others, and to the narrative by which we live. As our modes of reading (reading what other people write and say to us) translate into our modes of writing and speaking, we continually ponder the “set of rules” by which we want to read, to express ourselves, and to live. We can praise and blame, according to these rules, just as we can apologize (changing our expressions over time, as we recognize our trespasses) or forgive (changing our expressions over time, as we discover a way to have mercy on those who trespass). No matter what we end up valuing in any given time and place, what ethical living requires is that we dwell in depth on questions of ethics and value, that we work to develop and revise our schemas of valuation, and that we discuss these matters in a meaningful way—*expressing* the *ethos* that we perennially construct and reconstruct for ourselves.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Use of Bodies*. Trans. Adam Kotsko. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2016.
- Agiro, Christa Preston, et al. "Critical Readings of Young Adult Literature about LGBTQ Youth." *Ohio Journal of English Language Arts* 55.1 (Spring/Summer 2015): 23–30.
- Alarcón, Norma. "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism." *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, edited by Steven Seidman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 140–52.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín, and Satya P. Mohanty. "Reconsidering Identity Politics: An Introduction." *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, edited by Linda Martín Alcoff, Michael Hames-García, Satya P. Mohanty, and Paula M. L. Moya. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 1–9.
- Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.
- Allen, Chadwick. *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002.
- Allen, Paula Gunn. *Song of the Turtle: American Indian Literature 1974–1994*. New York: Ballantine, 1996.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 1987. 4th ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2012.
- . "Chapter 22: Putting Coyolxauhqui Together: A Creative Process." *Counterpoints* 90 (1999): 241–61.
- . "Com-positioning: Theories of Art." 11 August 2000. Box 55, Folder 9. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 9 October 2017.
- . "Counsels from the Firing ... past, present, future: Foreword to the Third Edition, 2001." 2001. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. 4th ed., Albany: State University of New York P, 2015. 261–66.
- . "Dominion Over Serpents." 13–14 May 1986. Box 32, Folder 11. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 5 October 2017.
- . "Early Version, 'Dominion Over Serpents.'" Box 33, Folder 4. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 6 October 2017.

- . “Geographies of Selves—Reimagining Identity: Nos/Otras (Us/Other), las Nepantleras, and the New Tribalism.” *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, by Gloria E. Anzaldúa, edited by AnaLouise Keating. 65–94.
- . Letter to Adrienne Rich. Box 19, Folder 7. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 13 October 2017.
- . Letter to Alice Walker. 3 October 1979. Box 43, Folder 14. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 11 October 2017.
- . Letter to Ann Russo and Patricia Cramer. 30 July 1985. Box 32, Folder 1. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 5 October 2017.
- . “Nepantla: In/Between and Shifting: Theories of Composition and Art.” 31 October 1997. Box 55, Folder 18. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 10 October 2017.
- . “Nepantla: The Creative Process, Process of Identity Change, Process of Solving/Resolving the Problems of Life.” 25 October 1995. Box 55, Folder 17. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 9 October 2017.
- . “Nos/otras: the split and how to bridge it.” 15 October 2003. Box 96, Folder 20. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 13 October 2017.
- . “self-in community.” 4 August 2001. Box 98, Folder 14. Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers. Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. 13 October 2017.
- . “Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric: Gloria Anzaldúa on Composition, Postcoloniality, and the Spiritual: An Interview with Andrea Lunsford.” 1996. *Interviews/Entrevistas*, edited by AnaLouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 2000. 251–80.
- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Trans. George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford UP, 2006.
- . *Poetics*. Trans. W. H. Fyfe. London: Loeb Classical Library, 1927.
- . *Politics*. Trans. C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998.
- Atkins-Goodson, Lori. “Picture This: Graphic Novels Draw in Reluctant Readers.” *Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE*, 5 July 2009.
- Baldwin, James. *The Amen Corner*. 1954. New York: Vintage, 1998.

- . *Blues for Mister Charlie*. 1964. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- . “Everybody’s Protest Novel.” 1949. *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon, 1984. 3–23.
- . Proof of *Blues for Mister Charlie*, Dial Press, New York, 1964. Box 48, Folder 669. Book-of-the-Month Club Records. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. 6 March 2017.
- Banita, Georgiana. *Plotting Justice: Narrative Ethics and Literary Culture After 9/11*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2012.
- Bickford, Susan. *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996.
- Blaeser, Kimberly M. “Like ‘Reeds through the Ribs of a Basket’: Native Women Weaving Stories.” *American Indian Quarterly* 21.4 (Fall 1997): 555–565.
- . “Writing Voices Speaking: Native Authors and an Oral Aesthetic.” *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, edited by Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999. 53–68.
- Blount, Marcellus. “‘A Certain Eloquence’: Ralph Ellison and the Afro-American Artist.” *American Literary History* 1.3 (Fall 1989): 675–88.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988.
- . *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. 1961. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983.
- Brill de Ramírez, Susan Berry. *Native American Life-History Narratives: Colonial and Postcolonial Navajo Ethnography*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2007.
- Bronstein, Michaela. “The Princess Among the Polemicists: Aesthetics and Protest at Midcentury.” *American Literary History* 29.1 (2017): 26–49.
- Burke, Kenneth. Letter to Ralph Ellison. 24 October 1945. Box I, Container 38, Folder 8. MSS83111 Ralph Ellison Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 16 May 2016.
- . Letter to Ralph Ellison. 16 December 1945. Box I, Container 38, Folder 8. MSS83111 Ralph Ellison Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 16 May 2016.
- . *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. 1941. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973.
- . “Ralph Ellison’s Trueblooded *Bildungsroman*.” *Speaking for You: The Vision of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Washington, DC: Howard UP, 1987. 349–59.

- . “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle.’” 1939. *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. 191–220.
- . *A Rhetoric of Motives*. 1950. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.
- Burke, Michael. “Visitors.” *Journal of New Jersey Poets* 42 (Spring/Summer 2005).
- Cadden, Mike. “The Irony of Narration in the Young Adult Novel.” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 25.3 (Fall 2000): 146–154.
- Callahan, John F. “Frequencies of Eloquence: The Performance and Composition of *Invisible Man*.” *New Essays on Invisible Man*. Ed. Robert O’Meally. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. 55–94.
- Carlo, Rosanne. *Unfolding and Enfolding Rhetorical Ethos: Stylistic, Material, and Place-Based Approaches*. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2015. UMI, 2015.
- Chamberlain, Charles. “From ‘Haunts’ to ‘Character’: The Meaning of Ethos and Its Relation to Ethics.” *Helios* 11 (1984): 97–108.
- Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham: Duke UP, 2012.
- Christoph, Julie Nelson. “Reconceiving Ethos in Relation to the Personal: Strategies of Placement in Pioneer Women’s Writing.” *College English* 64.6 (July 2002): 660–79.
- Code, Lorraine. *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.
- Colbert, Soyica Diggs. *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and the Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Conley, Paige A. “Strategically Negotiating Essence: Zitkala-Ša’s Ethos as Activist.” *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, edited by Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2016. 173–94.
- Contreras, Sheila Marie. “Literary Primitivism and ‘the New Mestiza.’” *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 8.1 (Fall 2006): 49–71.
- Cortez, José Manuel. *Atopic Peripheries: Rhetoric, Hybridity, and Latin American Resistance*. Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2017. UMI, 2017.
- Corts, Thomas. “The Derivation of Ethos.” *Speech Monographs* 35.2 (1968): 201–02.
- Crable, Bryan. *Ralph Ellison and Kenneth Burke: At the Roots of the Racial Divide*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2012.

- Crandall, Bryan Ripley. "Adding a Disability Perspective When Reading Adolescent Literature: Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*." *The ALAN Review* (Winter 2009): 71–78.
- Davis, Nicholas K. "Go Tell It on the Stage: *Blues for Mister Charlie* as Dialectical Drama." *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 17.2 (Spring 2005): 30–42.
- Davis, Tanita, and Sarah Stevenson. "Sherman Alexie." *Conversations with Sherman Alexie*, edited by Nancy J. Peterson. Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 2009. 187–191.
- Douglass, Frederick. 1845. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. New York: Dover, 1994.
- Eden, Kathy. *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2012.
- Ellison, Ralph. "American Negro Writing, a Problem of Identity." 1 November 1945. Bennington College, Bennington, VT. Box I, Container 172, Folder 8. MSS83111 Ralph Ellison Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 18 May 2016.
- . "The Art of Fiction: *An Interview*." 1955. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 210–24.
- . "Change and Joke and Slip the Yoke." 1958. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 100–112.
- . "'A Completion of Personality': A Talk with Ralph Ellison." 1974. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 785–817.
- . "Going to the Territory." 1979. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 591–612.
- . "Indivisible Man." 1970. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 353–95.
- . *Invisible Man*. 1952. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- . [Lecture Notes for "W50.0185 The American Vernacular as Symbolic Action." 1971.] New York University, New York, NY. Box I, Container 174, Folder 8. MSS83111 Ralph Ellison Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 18 May 2016.
- . Letter to Kenneth Burke. 23 November 1945. Box I, Container 38, Folder 8. MSS83111 Ralph Ellison Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 16 May 2016.
- . Letter to Richard Wright. [August 1945.] Box I, Container 76, Folder 5. MSS83111 Ralph Ellison Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 17 May 2016.

- . “The Little Man at Chehaw Station: The American Artist and His Audience.” 1978. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 489–519.
- . “The Novel as a Function of American Democracy.” 1967. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 755–65.
- . “On Initiation Rites and Power: A Lecture at West Point.” 1969. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 520–41.
- . “Richard Wright’s Blues.” 1945. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 128–44.
- . “Society, Morality and the Novel.” 1957. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Modern Library, 1995. 694–725.
- Enríquez-Loya, Aydé, and Kendall Leon. “Chicanx/Latinx Rhetorics as Methodology for Writing Program Design at HSIs.” *Composition Studies* 45.2 (2017): 212–15.
- Esplin, Marlene Hansen. “Self-translation and Accommodation: Strategies of Multilingualism in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* and Margarita Cota-Cárdenas’s *Puppet*.” *MELUS* 41.2 (Summer 2016): 176–201.
- Feinberg, Matthew, and Robb Willer. “From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 41.12 (2015): 1665–1681.
- Felski, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2015.
- . *Uses of Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- Field, Douglas. “Pentecostalism and All That Jazz: Tracing James Baldwin’s Religion.” *Literature & Theology* 22.4 (2008): 436–457.
- Fike, Matthew. “Collapsing the Binary in Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*.” *The CEA Forum* (Summer/Fall 2017): 88–126.
- Fitzhugh, George. “Origin of Civilization—What is Property?—Which is the Best Slave Race?” *De Bow’s Review* 25 (1858): 653–664.
- Fleming, Julius B., Jr. *Staging Civil Rights: African American Literature, Performance, and Innovation*. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2014. *Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations*. 1276.
- Foley, Barbara. *Wrestling with the Left: The Making of Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010.
- Foucault, Michel. “Prison Talk.” *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980. 37–54.

- Fowlkes, Diane L. "Moving from Feminist Identity Politics To Coalition Politics Through a Feminist Materialist Standpoint of Intersubjectivity in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*." *Hypatia* 12.2 (Spring 1997): 105–24.
- "The Freedom to Read Statement." *American Library Association*, www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement. Accessed 19 April 2019.
- Garber, Linda. "Spirit, Culture, Sex: Elements of the Creative Process in Anzaldúa's Poetry." *EntreMundos/ Among Worlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*, edited by AnaLouise Keating. New York: Palgrave, 2005. 213–26.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Ethos, World-View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols." *The Antioch Review* 17.4 (Winter 1957): 421–37.
- Gordon, Gerald T. "Rhetorical Strategy in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 41.4 (1987): 199–210.
- Grady, Constance. "What Do We Do When the Art We Love Was Created by a Monster?" *Vox*, 11 Oct. 2018.
- Hale, Dorothy J. "Fiction as Restriction: Self-Binding in New Ethical Theories of the Novel." *Narrative* 15.2 (May 2007): 187–206.
- Halloran, S. Michael. "Aristotle's Concept of Ethos, or If Not His Somebody Else's." *Rhetoric Review* 1.1 (Sept. 1982): 58–63.
- Hames-García, Michael. "How to Tell a Mestizo from an Enchirito®: Colonialism and National Culture in the Borderlands." *Diacritics* 30.4 (Winter 2000): 102–22.
- . "Who Are Our Own People?: Challenges for a Theory of Social Identity." *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, edited by Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-García. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000. 102–130.
- Hanlon, Christopher. "Eloquence and *Invisible Man*." *College Literature* 32.4 (Fall 2005): 74–98.
- Harper, Shaun R. "Black Male Student-Athletes and Racial Inequities in NCAA Division I College Sports: 2016 Edition." Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race & Equity in Education, 2016.
- Heer, Jeet, and Josephine Livingstone. "Woody Allen, #MeToo, and the Separation of Art and Artist." *The New Republic*, 2 Feb. 2018.
- Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism." *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: Routledge, 1977. 189–242.
- Henry, Gordon. *The Light People*. 1994. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2003.
- Holiday, Judy. "In[ter]vention: Locating Rhetoric's *Ethos*." *Rhetoric Review* 28.4 (2009): 388–405.

- Holmes, George Frederick. "Observations on a Passage in the Politics of Aristotle Relative to Slavery." *Southern Literary Messenger* 16 (1850): 193–205.
- Hughes, Langston. "Theme for English B." *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. New York: Holt, 1951. 39–40.
- Hungerford, Amy. "On Not Reading." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 11 Sept. 2016.
- Hyde, Michael J. "Rhetorically, We Dwell." *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, edited by Michael J. Hyde. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2004. xiii–xxviii.
- Insenga, Angela. "Taking Cartoons as Seriously as Books: Using Images to Read Words in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*." *SIGNAL Journal* 35.2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 18–26.
- Jackson, Lawrence. *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius*. New York: Wiley, 2002.
- Jarratt, Susan C., and Nedra Reynolds. "The Splitting Image: Postmodern Feminism and the Ethics of *Ethos*." *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory*, edited by James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin. Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1994.
- Jeyifous, Abiodun. "Black Critics on Black Theatre in America: An Introduction." *The Drama Review: TDR* 18.3 (1974): 34–45.
- Johns, Andy. "Dade County Removes Novel from School Library and Reading List." *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, 13 Nov. 2011.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. "Baldwin's Theatre." *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin*, edited by Michele Elam. New York: Cambridge UP, 2015. 85–99.
- Johnston, J. H. Annual Report of the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia*. Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1903. 50–52.
- Justice, Daniel Heath. "Currents of Trans/national Criticism in Indigenous Literary Studies." *American Indian Quarterly* 35.3 (Summer 2011): 334–52.
- Karni, Annie. "Clinton Puts Emotion on Display in New Hampshire." *Politico*, 3 Feb. 2016.
- Keating, AnaLouise. "Editor's Introduction: Re-envisioning Coyolxauhqui, Decolonizing Reality: Anzaldúa's Twenty-First-Century Imperative." *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, by Gloria E. Anzaldúa, edited by AnaLouise Keating. ix–xxxvii.
- . "Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit." *EntreMundos/Among Worlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*, edited by AnaLouise Keating. New York: Palgrave, 2005. 241–54.

- Keller, Marsha L. Waller. *Constructing an Ethos in the Borderlands*. Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2008. UMI, 2009.
- Kertzer, Adrienne. "Not Exactly: Intertextual Identities and Risky Laughter in Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*." *Children's Literature* 40 (2012): 49–77.
- Khazan, Olga. "The Simple Psychological Trick to Political Persuasion." *The Atlantic*, 1 Feb. 2017.
- Kim, Daniel Y. "Invisible Desires: Homoerotic Racism and Its Homophobic Critique in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 30.3 (Spring 1997): 309–28.
- Klotz, Sarah, and Carl Whithaus. "Gloria Anzaldúa's Rhetoric of Ambiguity and Antiracist Teaching." *Composition Studies* 43.2 (2015): 72–91.
- Koffka, K. *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*. 1935. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Krashen, Stephen D. *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*. Westport: Greenwood, 2004.
- Kynčlová, Tereza Jiroutová. "Complicating Home and Nation: Anzaldúa's Coalitional Aztlán." Eleventh Biennial MESEA Conference: Ethnicity and Kinship: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Family, Community, and Difference. The Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas. 2 June 2018, University of Graz. Conference Presentation.
- Laban, Monique. "Why Sherman Alexie's Sexual Misconduct Feels Like a Betrayal." *Electric Literature*, 20 Mar. 2018.
- Las Casas, Bartolomé de. *Apologetic Summary History of the People of These Indies*. 1566. *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West*. New York: Columbia UP, 1961. 530–539. <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/lascasas.htm>.
- Latour, Bruno. "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (Winter 2004): 225–48.
- Leon, Kendall, and Stacey Pigg. "Conocimiento as a Path to Ethos: Gloria Anzaldúa's Networked Rhetoric." *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, edited by Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2016. 257–78.
- Lioi, Anthony. "The Best-Loved Bones: Spirit and History in Anzaldúa's 'Entering into the Serpent.'" *Feminist Studies* 34.1/2 (2008): 73–98.
- Lugones, María. "On Complex Communication." *Hypatia* 21.3 (Summer 2006): 75–85.
- Lutz, Amy. "Who Joins the Military?: A Look at Race, Class, and Immigration Status." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 36.2: 167–188.
- Maher, John. "Asher, Alexie Top ALA 'Challenged Books' List in Wake of Allegations." *Publishers Weekly*, 10 Apr. 2018.

- Mailloux, Steven. "Re-Marking Slave Bodies: Rhetoric as Production and Reception." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 35.2 (2002): 96–119.
- Margolis, Rick. "Song of Myself: Interview with Sherman Alexie." *School Library Journal* (August 2007): 29.
- Martinez, Theresa A. "Making Oppositional Culture, Making Standpoint: A Journey into Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*." *Sociological Spectrum* 25 (2005): 539–70.
- Micciche, Laura. "Emotion, Ethics, and Rhetorical Action." *JAC* 25.1 (2005): 161–84.
- Miller, Arthur B. "Aristotle on Habit (ἔθος) and Character (ἦθος): Implications for the *Rhetoric*." *Speech Monographs* 41 (November 1974): 309–16.
- Mitchell, Koritha. "James Baldwin, Performance Theorist, Sings the *Blues for Mister Charlie*." *American Quarterly* 64.1 (2012): 33–60.
- Morrison, Toni. "The Visits of the Writers Toni Morrison and Eudora Welty." Interview with Kathy Neustadt. *Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bulletin* (Spring 1980): 2–5. Rpt. in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*. Ed. Danielle Taylor-Guthrie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1994. 84–92.
- Moya, Paula M. L. *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.
- Naples, Nancy A. "Borderlands Studies and Border Theory: Linking Activism and Scholarship for Social Justice." *Sociology Compass* 4/7 (2010): 505–18.
- Neary, Lynn. "'It Just Felt Very Wrong': Sherman Alexie's Accusers Go On the Record." *NPR*, 5 March 2018.
- Nicolini, Alyssa D. "Precocious Knowledge: Using Banned Books to Engage Youth in a Youth Lens." *English Journal* 104.3 (January 2015): 22–28.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 1990.
- Okihiro, Gary Y. *Island World: A History of Hawai'i and the United States*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2008.
- Owens, Louis. *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998.
- Parrish, Timothy L. "Ralph Ellison, Kenneth Burke, and the Form of Democracy." *Arizona Quarterly* 51.3 (Autumn 1995): 117–48.
- Perelman, Chaïm, and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. 1958. Trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1969.

- Pérez-Torres, Rafael. *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Phelan, John L. "The *Apologetic History* of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 49.1 (1969): 94–99.
- Piatote, Beth H. *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2013.
- Pittman, Coretta. "Black Women Writers and the Trouble with *Ethos*: Harriet Jacobs, Billie Holiday, and Sister Souljah." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 37.1 (2007): 43–70.
- Posnock, Ross. *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998.
- Prucha, Francis Paul. *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian," 1880–1900*. 1973. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2014.
- Rampersad, Arnold. *Ralph Ellison: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 2007.
- Rancière, Jacques. *La Mesentente [Disagreement]*. 1995. Trans. Julie Rose. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.
- Reese, Debbie. "An Open Letter About Sherman Alexie." *American Indians in Children's Literature*, 25 Feb. 2018.
- Reynolds, Nedra. "*Ethos* as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority." *Rhetoric Review* 11.2 (Spring 1993): 325–38.
- Rowe, Aimee Carrillo. "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation." *NWSA Journal* 17.2 (Summer 2005): 15–46.
- Ryan, Kathleen J., et al. "Introduction: Identifying Feminist Ecological Ethē." *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, edited by Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2016. 1–22.
- Saldaña-Portillo, Josefina. "Who's the Indian in Aztlán? Re-Writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón." *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, edited by Ileana Rodríguez. Durham: Duke UP, 2001. 402–23.
- Salzer, Maureen. "Bones, Artifacts, and Ownership: Gordon Henry, Jr.'s *The Light People* and the Politics of Cultural Appropriation." *North Dakota Quarterly* 70.1 (2003): 38–51.
- Samayoa, Andrés Castro, and Z Nicolazzo. "Affect and/as collective resistance in a post-truth moment." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 30.10 (2017): 988–93.
- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000.

- Sattler, William M. "Conceptions of *Ethos* in Ancient Rhetoric." *Communications Monographs* 14.1–2 (1947): 55–65.
- Schmertz, Johanna. "Constructing Essences: Ethos and the Postmodern Subject of Feminism." *Rhetoric Review* 18.1 (Autumn 1999): 82–91.
- Schweninger, Lee. "'Lost and Lonesome': Literary Reflections on Museums and the Roles of Relics." *American Indian Quarterly* 33.2 (Spring 2009): 169–199.
- Scott, Nathan A., Jr. "Ellison's Vision of *Communitas*." *Callaloo* 18.2 (1995): 310–18.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.
- Sepúlveda, Juan Ginés de. *Democrates Alter, Or, on the Just Causes for War Against The Indians*. 1550. *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West*. New York: Columbia UP, 1961. 523–529. <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/sepulved.htm>.
- Serafini, Frank, and Danielle Kachorsky and Stephanie Reid. "Revisiting the Multimodal Nature of Children's Literature." *Language Arts* 95.5 (May 2018): 311–321.
- Smiley, Sam. "Rhetorical Principles in Didactic Drama." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57.2 (1971): 147–152.
- Smith, Andrea. "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism." *GLQ* 16.1–2 (2010): 41–68.
- Smith, Craig R. "Ethos Dwells Pervasively: A Hermeneutic Reading of Aristotle on Credibility." *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, edited by Michael J. Hyde. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 20014. 1–19.
- Spanke, Jeff. "Magnificent Things and Terrible Men: Teaching Sherman Alexie in the Age of #MeToo." *English Education* 51.1 (Oct. 2018): 101–108.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching." *Diacritics* 32.3–4 (2002): 17–31.
- Stepto, Robert B. "Literacy and Hibernation: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*." 1979. *Speaking for You: The Vision of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Washington, DC: Howard UP, 1987. 360–85.
- Stirrup, David. "Narrative Community, Community Narrative: (Anti-)Academic Discourse in Gordon Henry Jr.'s *The Light People*." *Genre* 39 (Spring 2006): 141–162.
- Sullivan, Dale L. "The Ethos of Epideictic Encounter." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 26.2 (1993): 113–33.
- Talbot, Edith Armstrong. *Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study*. New York: Doubleday, 1904.

- Tate, Claudia. "Notes on the Invisible Women in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*." *Speaking for You: The Vision of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Washington, DC: Howard UP, 1987. 163–72.
- Thein, Amanda Haertling, and Mark A. Sulzer. "Illuminating Discourses of Youth through the Study of First-Person Narration in Young Adult Literature." *English Journal* 104.3 (January 2015): 47–53.
- Transcript of the Democratic Presidential Debate. *The New York Times*, 5 Feb. 2016.
- Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974.
- Vizenor, Gerald. "Transmotion in Native Stories and Literature." *Transmotion* 1.1 (2015).
- White, James Boyd. "Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life." *University of Chicago Law Review* 52.3 (1985): 684–702.
- Wright, John S. *Shadowing Ralph Ellison*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2006.
- Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. 1945. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.
- . [On Literature. n.d.] Box 6, Folder 128. Richard Wright Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. 6 April 2016.
- Yao, Steven G. *Foreign Accents: Chinese American Verse from Exclusion to Postethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.
- Yarbro-Bejarano, Yvonne. "Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera*: Cultural Studies, 'Difference,' and the Non-Unitary Subject." *Cultural Critique* 28 (Autumn 1994): 5–28.