

ABSTRACT

PINKSTON, ASHLEY NICOLE. Being Cyborg, Teaching Writing: Figuring a Feminist Practice in the Computer Composition Classroom. (Under the direction of Carolyn R. Miller.)

Over the last three decades, feminist scholars in composition and rhetoric have been invested in the project of finding an effective subject position for feminist writing instructors from which they can speak, be heard, and teach, because these feminists understand the broad impact of teacher-identity in the classroom, influencing teacher and students' perceptions, dynamics of class discussions, and interpretations of texts in the class. At the same time, feminists in composition and rhetoric have also been working to better understand relationships between gender, writing, and technology. Yet, to date, feminist researchers in the field have not considered the problem of situating the feminist instructor's subjectivity in the context of the computer composition classroom.

As a first step towards figuring an effective feminist subject position from which to teach in the technology-rich classroom, this study takes up the tasks of theorizing how cyborg subjectivity can shape the feminist pedagogue's "way of being" in the classroom, of discussing the practical implications of being cyborg for feminist pedagogues, and of situating feminist cyborg-teachers in the context of the computer composition classroom. This study reviews composition and rhetoric literature and reveals that, though cyborg theory has been appropriated to theorize the activist potential of the teacher-researcher, to critique computer mediated communication, to re-conceive traditional rhetoric, and to inform new pedagogies, previous appropriations have been criticized for not effectively addressing real people's material concerns and various identities and have not fully realized the

oppositional potential of feminist cyborg theory. In order to overcome the limitations of and challenges to cyborg theory in previous research, this study rearticulates cyborg feminism through the lens of Chela Sandoval's work in *Methodology of the Oppressed*. This study establishes a kinship between Haraway's cyborg characteristics and Sandoval's methodology of the oppressed and draws out the implications of reading Haraway alongside Sandoval for figuring a feminist practice in the computer composition classroom.

The first key implication is that, through trickster/differential movement, cyborg pedagogues can adopt previous metaphors for feminist composition pedagogy as equally viable temporary tactics and move among and between any number or combination of these "ways of being" without allegiance to any particular one. We can conceptualize a possible menagerie of feminist metaphors, such as mother, midwife, bitch, laughing medusa, netgrrl/geekgrrl/riotgrrl, through which cyborg teachers can trickster-shift. The second key implication is that, by employing Haraway's cyborgian skills or Sandoval's oppositional methodology, cyborg teachers can read, critique, and transform ideologies affecting their practice, paying special attention to ideologies informing the various feminist metaphors within composition and shaping their relationships to technology. I offer a practical scenario that follows a hypothetical instructor through the process of analyzing the mother, bitch, and midwife metaphors in the technology-rich composition classroom, considering when and why to shift from one tactic to the next, and transforming these tactics when needed. Paying attention to the tensions and ambivalences engendered by the relationships between technology and each stance, I address how each stance would feel for the feminist instructor in the technology-rich classroom and how each stance could be both empowering and limiting in the computer composition classroom.

Though moving differentially through the feminist menagerie poses several risks and highlights several potential sites for future research, I conclude by asserting the importance of being cyborg, teaching writing. By considering technology as part of the subjectivity of the teacher, we can ensure that we participate in constructing the relationships between ourselves and our technologies and we can refuse to allow machines invisible power over our choices, behaviors, and knowledge.

**BEING CYBORG, TEACHING WRITING: FIGURING A FEMINIST PRACTICE
IN THE COMPUTER COMPOSITION CLASSROOM**

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Personal Biography

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER II: CYBORGS IN COMPOSITION LITERATURE | 14 |
| Teacher-Researcher Critics and Their Cyborg Objectives | 15 |
| Cyborgian Critiques of Hypertext and CMC | 18 |
| Cyborgs Reconfigure Rhetoric | 25 |
| Cyborg Pedagogies—Connecting Theory and Praxis | 29 |
| Implications from the Literature | 33 |
| CHAPTER III: REARTICULATING CYBORG FEMINISM | 35 |
| CHAPTER IV: IMPLICATIONS FOR FEMINIST CYBORG PEDAGOGY | 44 |
| Moving Differentially Through the Menagerie | 55 |
| Mother | 57 |
| In what ways may technology empower maternal cyborg instructors? | 64 |
| In what ways may cyborg mothering with technology be problematic? | 67 |
| Reading Currents and Shifting Gears I | 71 |
| Bitch | 72 |
| How would bitchy cyborg teachers feel in the technology-rich classroom? | 75 |
| In what ways may technology empower bitch pedagogues in the networked classroom? | 78 |
| In what ways may technology limit cyborg bitch-teachers? | 80 |
| Reading Currents and Shifting Gears II | 83 |
| Midwife | 84 |
| How would cyborg midwife-teachers feel in the technology-rich classroom? | 87 |
| How may technology empower midwife pedagogues in the networked classroom? | 89 |
| In what ways may technology limit cyborg midwife-teachers? | 93 |
| Reviewing the Benefits and Drawbacks of Cyborg Pedagogy or “Dancing the Spiral Dance” . . . | 96 |
| CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION | 101 |
| NOTES | 106 |
| WORKS CITED | 114 |

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

On a hot August evening in 2001 dressed in a new conservative blue suit and pulling my laptop and LCD projector, I made my way up the spiraling walkway through the center of the Harrelson building on campus. I was practicing to myself what I would say to my first English 111 students once I reached my classroom. In the weeks and months leading up to this day, I was acutely aware of “who I was”—a twenty-seven year old, white, middle-class, Southern, soft-spoken woman—because I knew that “who I was” would impact my classroom. My age, voice, appearance, graduate-student status, and female gender gave rise to concerns about authority in the classroom. So, when I stepped into my first classroom as a teacher, I was prepared to position myself in the classroom, not as an all-knowing authority on writing and rhetoric, but as an experienced, skilled, tech-savvy writer. At the heart of my anxieties were the relationships of identity or subjectivity to my students’ perceptions of me as a teacher and to my own sense of confidence or empowerment as a teacher. In feminist terms, I was struggling to find an effective subject position from which to speak and to be heard.

Feminist scholars in composition and rhetoric have been interested in the subjectivity or subject positioning of writing instructors since the 1970s, when the idea of providing safe, nurturing environments for sharing writing emerged out of feminist consciousness raising groups. Many teachers following such early cultural feminist theory positioned themselves as mother-teachers. Several feminist scholars have since argued that mothering pedagogies do not effectively prepare students to engage in the kind of confrontational argumentation required in our democratic society and that the mother-teacher role is not empowering for

female teachers (Jarrett; hooks; Miller; Schell). Thus, feminists have been invested in the purposeful “way of being” or subject positioning of instructors who wish to teach from a feminist perspective because they want to be able to theorize effective positions from which to teach that serve the needs of our students and also empower feminist instructors.

In more recent years, feminists have begun to question how the gendered, raced, and classed bodies of instructors impact their experience as teachers and affect students’ experiences in their classrooms (Johnson; Eichorn; Cunningham and Goldstein). Cheryl L. Johnson in “Participatory Rhetoric and the Teacher as Racial/Gendered Subject” offers a useful characterization of three issues related to the teacher’s subjectivity at play in the classroom: “the social construction of the student’s gaze, the body as text, [and] the spoken/written text(s) as text” (410). The “student’s gaze” is made up of cultural narratives of the university system, the student’s previous experiences with teachers, and cultural narratives related to gender, race, class, and sex. The teacher’s physical identity markers (race, sex, size, clothing, carriage, voice) make up the socially constructed “body as text” that is read by both the instructor and the students. In a composition classroom, “the spoken/written text(s) as texts” could be student-produced writings, in-class discussions, or required course readings and both the teacher’s and students’ interpretations of these texts could be influenced by the subjectivity of the instructor. Therefore, the teacher’s subjectivity, whether constructed from feminist theories of pedagogy, the teacher’s personal and professional experiences, and/or from material markers of socially constructed identity, has the potential to influence the teacher’s perception of her role in the classroom, the student’s perceptions of the teacher, and the interpretation and reception of text and discourse in the classroom. Since subjectivity is a process of construction(s) rather than fixed subject

locations, if we as composition instructors pay attention to the cultural, institutional, and personal narratives at play in our subjectivities, we can understand how our identity impacts our pedagogy, discover potential sites for actively writing ourselves differently or subversively, and theorize more effective “ways of being” as feminist tactics.

One further complication must be considered; whether due to individual instructors’ personal commitments to teaching with technology, to the drive within the field of computers and composition to include computer literacy as an integral part of literacy education, or to institutional or departmental technology requirements, more and more composition instructors are teaching writing in technology-rich environments. What impact would the context of a computer classroom have on the subjectivity of the feminist writing instructor? Cultural narratives about women and technology would clearly play a role in the students’ gaze and in the readings of the teacher’s “body as text.” Technology also makes it possible for the instructor to play in online discussions without the material markers of her identity shaping the class discussions. Furthermore, cultural narratives concerning women and technology would affect the teacher’s construction of her role in the classroom. For example, if the feminist instructor creates a subject position based on radical feminist theory, like *écriture féminine*, she might attempt to adopt wildly feminine attributes as a form of mimicry intended to subvert traditional masculine language conventions, knowledge systems, and instructional practices. Such a position would engender a double oppression for the instructor. First, radical feminist theory constructs language and, thus, writing instruction as tools of patriarchy that work by suppressing the feminine. Secondly, from a radical feminist perspective, the disciplines of science and technology are equally as entrenched in patriarchal traditions of suppressing the feminine. Even though computer technologies, like hypertext,

could be employed to support radical feminist textuality (circularity, metonymy, multiple subjectivity, etc.), the teacher's construction of her subjectivity would make it difficult for her to feel empowered in a computer composition classroom. Clearly, in order to fully understand and actively construct the subjectivity of the feminist instructor, we must also consider various relationships between and among the teacher, students, texts, and technologies in the technology-rich context.

Though feminists still have not considered the multiple relationships between the composition teacher's subjectivity and the technology-rich classroom context, feminist scholars in computers and composition have produced a significant body of research studying the complex relationships between women and technology that can help us understand some of the cultural narratives at play in the classroom. Some feminists contend that the culture of and cultural narratives about computer technologies are predominantly masculine and are hostile to or unwelcoming for women and feminine values. Other researchers suggest that, though the electronic landscape can be frontier-like in its gender oppressions (sexual harassment, combative rhetoric, silencing of women's voices, etc.), women have been involved in computer technologies from the very beginning and still continue to find ways to use technology to support their daily lives, to create online communities, and to further the goals of feminism and radical democracy. As part of an effort to theorize women's oppressive and liberatory experiences with and relationships to technology, many feminist compositionists have turned to Donna Haraway's cyborg theory, which is a postmodern theory of oppositional subjectivity that encourages marginalized people to get involved in and use technological networks to disrupt oppressive techno-power systems and that constructs the subject as simultaneously human and machine, colonized and colonizer,

masculine and feminine. While much of the research focuses on the potential for computer mediated communication (CMC) and hypertext to help our students explore cyborg subjectivity, several feminist compositionists suggest cyborg subjectivity as a possible techno-activist-subject for the teacher-researcher and rhetor. However, researchers have not yet addressed with any extended treatment the practical implications of cyborg subjectivity for the feminist instructor in the computer composition classroom.

As part of my own struggle to include feminism in my pedagogy and as an exploratory step towards understanding, constructing, and theorizing an effective subject position from which to speak and be heard as a writing instructor in the computer classroom, the current project takes up the problem of situating feminist pedagogy in the technology-rich composition classroom. The following research questions drive this thesis: How can feminist cyborg theory help us construct an effective subject position for feminist pedagogues in the computer composition classroom? What might this feminist cyborg pedagogy look like in actual practice? How does feminist cyborg subjectivity help us better understand ourselves in relationship to our contexts—our students, our classrooms, and our technologies?

Some definitional work is needed before I explain how I answer these questions because two key terms that I use throughout the essay do not have broadly accepted established definitions. The terms “feminism” and “cyborg” have different meanings for different scholars and several different operational definitions in the literature. For a simple but inclusive definition of feminism, I turn to the work of bell hooks in *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. She characterizes the book as a “primer” or “pamphlet” written for men and women who do not understand feminism, for people who know feminists

only as stereotypes—man-haters, lesbians, godless, oppressors of white men—and for feminists who have people in their lives who continually devalue their work (iv, vii). She offers a simple definition of feminism: “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (viii). Such a broad and inclusive definition is necessary to encompass the diverse array of feminisms practiced in composition and rhetorical studies. Feminists of color and lesbian feminists, who have bristled over previous definitions of feminism that place more importance on gender than on race or sexual orientation, are likely to accept hooks’s definition, since the definition addresses the feminist goal of engaging sexism and includes as an equal term the goal of ending “oppression” across race, sex, class, gender, religion, and ethnicity. Susan Jarratt, in “Feminist Pedagogy,” asserts that feminist pedagogy in composition can no longer be characterized by any one set of feminist practices. She defines feminist pedagogues as anyone who understands “contemporary society as sexist and patriarchal, and [sees] the complicity of reading and writing, and teaching in those conditions” and “who define[s] their professional activities in ways that include efforts to transform that world” (115-116). With hooks’s definition, I would revise Jarratt’s definition; feminist composition pedagogy is any practice of teaching reading and writing that aims to overcome “sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” within the field (our systems of writing, knowing, and teaching) and in the broader society (vii).

While a broad, and thus flexible definition for feminism works well for my purposes, “cyborg” has a specific meaning that requires additional explanation. Donna Haraway’s work, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” is widely regarded as the authoritative voice of cyborg feminism, and I look to her work for a definition of cyborg subjectivity. As becomes clear in my review of

composition literature below, there are many different interpretations of Haraway's cyborg, due in large part to the rhetorical style in her manifesto, a purposeful attempt to avoid the easy transmission of meaning. Therefore, I provide an overview of Haraway's cyborg theory by explaining each of the following activities that characterize cyborg subjectivity; a cyborg: 1) exists as a border being to break down binary dualisms, 2) writes in order to engage oppression at the language level, 3) finds connections and community through affinity and kinship, and 4) shifts identity in the manner of trickster figures.

The role of borders in Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" is tied to traditional Western epistemology and ontology that maintained distinctions between people and cultures: "self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive. . ." (177). Haraway asserts that, at the time of Reagan's Star Wars projects and through the continuing development of biotechnologies and communications technologies, the boundaries between these binaries are blurred (165). As an effect, "the home, workplace, market, public arena, the body itself—all can be dispersed and interfaced in nearly infinite, polymorphous ways" (Haraway, "Cyborg" 163). According to Haraway, technoscience's blurring of boundaries, dispersing of traditional spaces, and interfacing with organisms mean that women and men can be oppressed in "infinite, polymorphous ways" by the "informatics of domination," the networked system of biotechpower (161-162).

On the other hand, Haraway points out that there is no reason for women to despair over the breakdown of Western systems of knowledge that have been the source of colonialism, sexism, racism, and classism. These breakdowns provide sites for interrupting the transmission of information that biotechpower relies upon. Haraway's mythic cyborg being inhabits these borders and finds "*pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries" and takes

“responsibility in their construction” (150, emphasis in original). The figure of the cyborg is a metaphor of this positioning—a hybrid of organism and machine. She also means the metaphor literally in the sense that she promotes forming “tight couplings” with technologies, since “machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves” (Haraway 178). Cyborgs, then, are responsible for constructing the boundaries of their subjectivity both literally and metaphorically as being on the borders, understanding the human/machine self as multiple, partial, and contradictory.

Writing is a primary tactic of cyborgs. Haraway sees both stories from women of color and feminist science fiction as cyborg writing. She writes, “Feminist cyborg stories have the task of recoding communication and intelligence to subvert command and control” (175). Some cyborg stories like those from women of color are told from the position of the colonized (Haraway “Cyborg” 175). Other cyborg stories come from science fiction and are stories about monstrous border crossings that imagine liberatory shape-shifting. Some tell specific histories of real-life cyborgs. Cyborg writing through multiple competing narratives, historical specificity, border crossings, boundary deconstructions, and fractured authorial subjectivity disrupts the flow of information through the networks at the language level. The processes of disassembling and reassembling language and subjectivity in cyborg writing are also the basis through which cyborgs form communities.

Cyborgs refuse coalitions based on identity and form alliances through affinity and kinship. In the early days of feminism, women formed coalitions based on the shared identity of “woman.” However, such coalitions break down when it becomes clear that the category “woman” does not encompass all the experiences and oppressions of women from different races, classes, and sexualities. Haraway argues that effective, inclusive forms of political

alliance can be formed when the basis of the coalition is a shared commitment to assembling and disassembling multiple, partial, contradictory oppositional subjectivities as tactics for understanding and undermining systems of power. For example, Haraway draws heavily from Chela Sandoval's work as a graduate student in the mid-1980s to describe how U.S. women of color formed coalition around "a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity or political kinship" (156). The identity markers of individual Latina-American, Asian-American, or African-American feminists were not the basis for alliance, rather U.S. women of color created coalition by choosing to see their different feminist tactics as sharing similar processes of negotiating border subjectivity and similar goals of overcoming the various systems of oppressions in our world. Often, in order to achieve their oppositional goals, cyborg women of color shifted their identities and assumed contrary subject positions in the manner of traditional trickster figures in folk cultures.

Haraway does not directly address the trickster in relation to her cyborg in her "Cyborg Manifesto," but her cyborg is inflected with trickster characteristics. In the introduction to *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Haraway describes how through the essays she attempts "to look again at some feminist discards from the Western deck of cards, to look for the trickster figures that might turn a stacked deck into a potent set of wild cards for refiguring possible worlds" (4). According to Jeanne Campbell Reesman, in the introduction to *Trickster Lives: Culture and Myth in American Fiction*, trickster figures occur in tribal and indigenous cultures throughout the world, although the characteristics of the trickster vary across tribes and cultures. In general, the trickster is characterized by the following: 1) they shift shape from one appearance to another, 2) they

do not abide by community morals, 3) they play tricks and deceive, 4) they are comic god-like figures that are often lewd, 5) they are heroic for transforming or inverting situations often by manipulation and negation (Reesman xii-xix). Tricksters play in the boundaries or edges of communities and embody contradictions in order to show the humanity in the supernatural world, to expose the animal elements in human cultures, and to help those within the community to see what lies outside their culture. Though they are comic and ironic, cyborgs as tricksters still do the serious work of helping people deal with the differences between themselves and others.

A cyborg feminist subjectivity is a way of being that embraces border crossings, writes as a political activity, forms alliances through affinity, and embodies trickster characteristics. Through the work in the following sections, I explore how cyborg subjectivity can be cast as an answer to the problem of figuring a feminist pedagogy for the computer composition classroom. I explore how cyborg teachers can employ the skills of border being, cyborg writing, affinity coalition, and trickster-shifting to read, dissect, and transform their subjectivity in relationship to technology.

In Chapter II, I review composition literature for ways cyborg theory has been adopted. Cyborg feminism as theorized by Haraway takes up two issues. First, Haraway states that one her of central goals in cyborg theory is to help undo the “deepened dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism in the social practices, symbolic formations, and physical artifacts associated with ‘high technology’ and scientific culture” (154). Secondly, she hopes that cyborg subjectivity can help unite socialist, Marxist, and radical feminists, who by the mid 1980s had become bitterly divided by their allegiance to their respective feminist ideologies and practices (155-161). While many researchers pay

close attention to the cyborg's ability to intervene in technoscience, researchers have yet to address the cyborg's potential as a subject capable of recasting various individual feminism(s) as viable temporary tactics for all feminists. I find that, despite significant research that deploys cyborg feminism as a critical tool for forming teacher-researcher subjectivities, analyzing CMC and hypertext technologies, reconceiving rhetoric, and creating new pedagogy, these approaches have significant limitations and have not understood cyborg feminism as a system or "set of skills" or considered the practical implications of cyborg subjectivity for feminist composition instructors in the computer classroom.

In Chapter III, I read cyborg feminism through the lens of Sandoval's "methodology of the oppressed," in order to fully utilize the cyborg's oppositional potential and minimize its theoretical limitations. I establish a kinship between Sandoval's work and Haraway's cyborg theory and provide an overview of Sandoval's theory of differential consciousness and her five oppositional technologies. I argue that reading Haraway with Sandoval helps to clarify Haraway's meaning and terminology, to overcome charges that cyborg theory is not responsive to real women's lives and is identityless, and to highlight the importance of trickster movement for cyborg subjectivity.

In Chapter IV, I draw out the implications of the re-articulated cyborg theory from Chapter III for the subjectivity of the feminist instructor in the computer composition classroom. Specifically, I explain how trickster or differential shifting relates to previous modes of opposition within feminism. I propose viewing previous metaphors for the teacher's subject position in feminist composition pedagogy as possible members of a pedagogical menagerie and moving differentially or trickster-like through this menagerie as

temporary, partial tactical adoptions of different modes of opposition. Then, I describe how Sandoval's five technologies and Haraway's cyborg skills can be applied to read, deconstruct, and transform previous feminist modes of opposition into effective, empowering tactics for promoting egalitarian social relations. I provide an example from within composition of how feminists have largely discredited the feminist tactic of mothering in the classroom and established conceptual hierarchies for various feminist pedagogies. In order to place my theory of cyborg subjectivity for the feminist instructor in the context of the technology-rich classroom, I re-empower three metaphors—mother, bitch, and midwife—in composition's feminist menagerie and analyze the relationships each metaphor has with technology. I structure my analysis with a practical scenario, describing when and why an instructor may want to shift from one subject position to the next. I also use the following questions to guide my discussion of the ways technology impacts the cyborg-teacher's subjectivity: (1) What would each stance feel like to the feminist teacher in the technology-rich classroom? (2) In what ways may this stance be empowering in a technology-rich classroom? (3) In what ways may this stance be limiting in relationship to technology? I then discuss the benefits and limitations of trickster-moving from mother to bitch to midwife and of my analysis of the relationships of technology to such moves.

In Chapter V, I summarize my argument, point to ways future research can build upon my own, and explore some potential risks, both for instructors in general and for my own practice, of feminist cyborg pedagogy. I conclude by asserting that being cyborg is worth the risks for feminist writing instructors because, by constructing a subjectivity integrally tied to technology and committed to provisional, partial answers, we can take

pleasure in and be responsible for our relationships with technology, our students, and ourselves.

CHAPTER II: CYBORGS IN COMPOSITION LITERATURE

Approximately twelve years ago, composition studies began to appropriate cyborg theory in response to concerns in the computers and writing community about persistent troublesome attitudes and beliefs towards technology, which are broadly classified as technomanias and technophobias.¹ Fueled by the influx of the computer-mediated communication technologies on the educational market and unhindered by studies indicating otherwise, some researchers and practitioners in the 1980s believed that technology had a positive impact not only on teaching students how to write but also on subverting oppressive power structures within the classroom, university, and society at large (Hawisher et al. 268); enthusiasm for the tools often superseded critique. By contrast, other researchers and practitioners resisted technology's presence in English classrooms because they lacked training or they felt on principle that teaching computer technology was not part of composition curriculum. During the 1990s, more researchers questioned whether computers could really help composition instructors pursue the goals of liberatory education. Several studies, like Lester Faigley's 1992 work, "The Achieved Utopia of the Networked Classroom," acknowledged that online discussions and experiences often replicate or even intensify societal power differentials. Faigley concludes that there is a "need to theorize at greater depth and to take into account the richness of the classroom context" (199). In a 1992 interview by Carolyn Handa, Cynthia Selfe coined the phrase, "nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla," as one response among many others that attempted to theorize these conflicting experiences with and narratives about technology.² The phrase is laden with references to the

work of Paul Virilio, Michel de Certeau, Donna Haraway, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantel Mouffe, and as the first adoption of cyborg theory in composition, it played a part in launching cyborg research in the field.

Since Selfe's initial appropriation, cyborg theory has helped define teacher/researcher objectives, critique CMC and hypertext, reconfigure traditional rhetorics, and inform new pedagogies. In the discussion below, I will address each of these four ways that the cyborg figures into the literature of rhetoric and composition and discuss the implications of these adoptions of cyborg theory for feminist pedagogy in the computer classroom.

Teacher-Researcher Critics and Their Cyborg Objectives

Initially, the lure of cyborg theory for composition studies was that, by defining their roles as activist critics, compositionists could help put the brakes on uncritical adoptions of technology while at the same time explore the potentially subversive role of technology in educational and political change. Selfe's "nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla" is such a teacher-researcher critic. In addition to cyborg characteristics, two other terms shape Selfe's oppositional subjectivity: Michel deCerteau's guerilla and Deleuze and Guattari's nomad. She uses guerilla to indicate that the moves cyborg feminists make are tactics that must always change as the State finds ways to control resistance (Handa 74-75). Elsewhere, in "Writing as Democratic Social Action in a Technological World: Politicizing and Inhabiting Virtual Landscapes," Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe describe nomads as having "multiple identities, absolute speed, and invisibility" (352). The qualities of the nomad relate to Haraway's idea of the trickster, since nomads move from place to place and do what they need to do and move on. Selfe urges teachers to see themselves as "English teacher-

activist[s]” with multiple, partial, contradictory selves enmeshed in a “discursively constituted political structure” who can enact change by committing to create and participate in virtual spaces (Handa 76-77). In these electronic discussions, political selves are actively constructed. Selfe insists, “If nomadic feminist cyborg guerillas commit themselves to supporting discourse about radical democracy within computer nets, the unstable, partial, temporary discursive formations that individuals construct could serve as forces that extend and transform the existing intellectual and political terrain” (Handa 77). This articulation of the cyborg finds “profound subversive power” in the official and unofficial actions—“part war machine, part humanist”—of computer-mediated composition teachers (76-77).

Other scholars describe the cyborgian teacher-researcher critic in ways that account for the actual lived experiences of students and teachers. In this appropriation, the cyborg seeks and highlights competing narratives. For example, Pamela Takayoshi in “Complicated Women: Examining Methodologies for Understanding the Uses of Technology” argues that feminist research in technology and composition has not fully explored the complicated relationship women have with technology; further, she insists that research overemphasizes “teacher-told, person-based” technology victim narratives, specifically those stories told by the teacher about student experiences. In addition to urging more methodological pluralism, she contends that cyborgs have not only victim narratives but also triumphant narratives. She proposes that researchers look for stories of women who use technology as a way of countering their previous disempowering experiences. She states that “a conception of technology as ambiguous moves beyond a vision of technology as merely non-neutral and articulates the ways technologies have always been positive and oppressive, oftentimes both at the same time” (Takayoshi). These “blurred relationships” in cyborg narratives

acknowledge the ambiguity of technology, the ambiguity of women's relationships to technology, and the possibility of non-dualistic stances toward technology.

Selfe and Takayoshi have vastly different visions of cyborgs as teacher-researchers. Takayoshi adopts one of the cyborg's characteristics for a specific operational use. She also tempers the technomania underlying Selfe's appropriation. Selfe discusses at length the contradictions of technology use, but she tends to resolve these contradictions by asserting that we can choose to use technology to serve one purpose and not the other. The pedagogical implication of Selfe's nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla is that teachers should use technology subversively, a position that exposes a potentially technomaniacal belief in the deployment of technology for positive change.

However, Selfe's construction of the nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla is possibly one of the most useful articulations of cyborg feminism for instructors in composition studies, since her cyborg envisions political attempts to subvert State control as temporary tactics, multiple subjectivity as constructed political identities, and shifting identities as trickster-like moves. Selfe expressly discusses the latter in terms of a political persona for feminist instructors. Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe write about the cyborg as a political alter ego that we can put on and take off to accomplish our goals of liberatory education ("Writing" 351). With a broader interest in an effective political theory, Selfe stops short of drawing out the practical implications of such shifts in identity for cyborg feminist instructors in computer composition classrooms and does not discuss the pragmatics of how the instructor's nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla persona impacts the feminist pedagogue's approach to issues such as authority and power in the computer classroom. Furthermore, despite being one of the initial published discussions of cyborg theory in composition, her

nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla has received little critical attention in the published literature.

Cyborgian Critiques of Hypertext and CMC

By and large, cyborgian critics, who explore the relationship between cyborg subjectivity and hypertext and CMC, represent the largest contributors to composition studies' cyborg literature. Preoccupations with three aspects of cyborg subjectivity characterize this discourse: multiple and partial subjectivities at the electronic interface, competing narratives arising from these partialities, and the construction of subjectivity through writing. Much debate emerges from a potential dislocation between theory and practice. The following discussion first addresses work that promotes the theoretical cyborgian potential of hypertext and CMC and then discusses research that considers the practical experience of students, researchers, and other online participants with hypertext and CMC. Theoretically, writing with hypertext and CMC, like e-mail, synchronous chat, and asynchronous chat, provides a ripe opportunity to construct dispersed subjects and to read those subjects for contradictory discourses and power relations. Some researchers suggest that, in actual practice, people's personal goals, speech conventions, and social and political identities shape the degree to which online writing really produces "new" subjects, or cyborgs. Therefore, although theory predicts a significant difference between a person's offline identity and their online identities, the differences found in practical research on hypertext and CMC are not as significant as theory might predict. The tension between hypertext and CMC's potentials and people's actual experiences with writing online becomes clear in the literature touting two supposedly cyborgian tools, hypertext and online chat.

In “Control and the Cyborg: Writing and Being Written in Hypertext,” Johndan Johnson-Eilola argues that hypertext places the reader in a cyborg subject position because the boundary between reader and writer blurs. With each click on a link, the reader has the potential to shift and change subject positions, becoming a blurred subjectivity that Johnson-Eilola names the reader/writer. He also argues that the cyborg gives us a good metaphor for understanding the competing narratives of mastery and resistance that students can participate in when they author hypertext—either by reading or writing. He states, “teachers and theorists can encourage students/users/writers/readers to see hypertext as the machine-tool that allows them to conquer new frontiers; or teachers and theorists can encourage students to see hypertext as the machine that breaks down, resists totalization” (“Control” 19). Hypertext is a tool for accessing information in the “frontier” environment of the Web: If you can navigate through the information, you master it. But, hypertext can also tell local, provisional narratives that resist the “frontier” mentality and deconstruct State instruments of power. In a cyborgian move, Johnson-Eilola suggests that we hold both narratives of control—mastery and resistance—as acting equally in the process of authoring hypertext.

Similarly, in “Meditations upon Hypertext: A Rhetorics for Cyborgs,” Pamela Gilbert theorizes that the cyborg’s ability to simultaneously hold two or more competing narratives enables hypertext theorists to claim an ethical stance from which to read/write. She argues that existing hypertext theories do not account for the metaphors of space/science, for dispersal of the author, for the colonization of the marginal, or for the inequality of reader and writer and that cyborg theory offers ideas for how to responsibly address these omissions. The cyborg, she suggests, is a good figuration of an ethical/political subjectivity that acts as a form of rhetorics; as cyborgs, people read/write from a stance of neither

complete immersion nor complete distancing, disrupting traditional ideas of the self as writer, reader, and knower.

Potentially shifting subjectivities play an analogous role in the literature about online synchronous communication. The fluidity of identity and of group membership in pseudonymous online environments is one of the key advantages of such spaces because it emphasizes the constructed nature of the self and the discursive potential for undermining any construction. In “Inside the Teaching Machine: Actual Feminism and (Virtual) Pedagogy,” Cynthia Haynes contends that feminists need to take their pedagogies into virtual spaces. Such a move helps open up traditional feminist politics of location. Historically, feminist conceptions of the space from which to locate ourselves have maintained an inside/outside binary and “fixed” or “encumbered” feminist agendas and have also struggled to keep politics central—especially in the classroom (Haynes par.13-17). Haynes believes that by going online feminists can employ the movement of Rosi Braidotti’s nomad, the morphing capabilities of Haraway’s cyborg, and the laughing play of Helene Cixous’ medusa to deconstruct these restrictive conceptions of space, giving feminists the “conceptual and physical properties of movement, speed, and unrestricted access” (par. 8, 18).

Operating in this virtual space, cyberfeminist pedagogues can teach students to play with the constructed nature of the self through cyborg shape-shifting; thus, graphic or textual avatars serve as agents of social activism. In particular, Haynes argues that writing the self in MOO spaces offers a new way of playing with self and writing. According to Haynes, MOOs allow students and teachers to define their own language by setting conventions and by programming emotes and verbs for online discussions; students experience what it is like to be created entirely in a textual world and to have to perform discursively in that world,

whether through dialogue or silence. The idea underlying Haynes' belief in self construction in online environments is that physical identity markers fall away and students can choose the identity they wish to speak from; consequently the theory goes, marginalized students are more likely to speak and explore the constructed nature of identity through language.

Haynes makes another cyborgian move that highlights competing narratives, when she addresses briefly the need to consider the pitfalls of technomania and see the potential drawback of surveillance of networked subjectivities. Still like a laughing medusa she urges that we have to “fly through” the machine (teaching and technological) to “penetrate the no-fly zone, to fly in a ‘quaquaversal,’ to fly in every direction simultaneously, to fly the offline coup” (Haynes Para 55).³

Though Johnson-Eilola, Gilbert, and Haynes do not directly address hypertext and CMC's theoretical cyborg potential in terms of supporting a feminist cyborg composition instructor's own subjectivity, together these theoretical works have pedagogical implications for cyborg teachers. Specifically, if one of the goals of cyborg pedagogy is to encourage students to play with and experience cyborg subjectivity, then creating classroom activities and projects for students to read/write hypertext and CMC would be central to classroom practice. Furthermore, these theoretical works help teachers to understand how the technologies of hypertext and CMC affect power dynamics as students read/write. Some research on how people actually use hypertext and CMC indicates, however, that simply using and understanding the technologies may not be sufficient to create cyborgs—politically committed and motivated subjects.

Research on hypertext products, particularly on gendered rhetorical production, brings into question whether cyborg possibilities are fully realized in actual Web sites.

Danielle DeVoss and Cynthia Selfe in “‘This Page is Under Construction’: Reading Women Shaping On-line Identities” claim that they can be. DeVoss and Selfe rhetorically analyze ten women’s home pages and find that women represent themselves as fractured, multiple identities online; they name these women cyborgs. They contend that women challenge and rewrite “conventional narratives of the public-private divide, the unified subject, and cyberspace as a male domain,” which suggests that hypertext’s theoretical potential is being borne out in practice (DeVoss and Selfe 46).

In contrast, Donna LeCourt and Luann Barnes in “Writing Multiplicity: Hypertext and Feminist Textual Politics” investigate whether hypertext promotes the feminist textual politics of Donna Haraway and Luce Irigaray—the disruption of phallogocentric epistemology and the deconstruction of the suppression of multivocal authorship. LeCourt and Barnes analyze their experiences writing hypertext. In their account, hypertext does not in and of itself promote multivocal textual production with deconstructive power, but it does promote reflection upon the process of self-creation. LeCourt and Barnes’ ambiguous findings and “restrained enthusiasm” for the cyborgian, subversive potential of hypertext bring into question DeVoss and Selfe’s positive results.

Stephen Knadler finds clear challenges to the liberatory potentials of hypertext when he examines black women’s relationships with hypertext and “cyborg identities” in his work, “E-Racing Difference in E-Space: Black Female Subjectivity and the Web-based Portfolio.” Knadler examines first-year composition Web-portfolios at Spelman College, a Black college for women. Assignments asked students to write about “racial and gender identity” in a variety of genres. Despite significant coursework on these issues, most students defined coming to “voice” as a writer as “mean[ing] an authentic self” and insisted on “personalism

and intimacy rather than a cyborgian experimentation with different kinds of self-representation” (Knadler 246). He concludes that race is an experience that affects what identities women want to project online and cautions cyborgian theorists of gender and technology about being blind to racial and class differences.

In addition to race and class, gender can influence the online identities and activities of women, especially in relation to gendered speech conventions. In her reading of the OKLABOMB listserv, Jacqueline J. Lambiase found that, like Cassandra from Christa Wolf’s novel of the same name, women in these lists had few rhetorical choices: They could speak but not be heard, turn away from the discourse without speaking, or adopt the “warfare” rhetoric of the dominant postings. Lambiase suggests that the cyborg can open up these discursive options by using computer mediated communication “to disrupt, to be disrupted, and to endure, in order to gain a place for being and for speaking” (123). Like Haraway, she encourages women to write themselves electronically, maintaining their existence on the networks and “surviv[ing] the diaspora” (123). But, what if survival requires being continually harassed, flamed, or otherwise constructed against one’s wishes? Lambiase proposes that groups be more mobile and willing to disperse and regroup when their alliances, practices, and rules are broken. She finds that in practice women are adopting multiple subjectivities to survive but suggests that women would benefit from another cyborgian characteristic, mobility or dispersion.

While Johnson-Eilola, Gilbert, DeVoss and Selfe, and Haynes are optimistic about cyborgian potentials, Knadler, LeCourt and Barnes, and Lambiase find that cyborg subjectivity does not necessarily live up to its potential in the actual experiences of writers. Hypertext and CMC may encourage or enable multiple, partial subjectivities but, to create

the kind of subjectivity that Haraway promotes, the human component of the human-machine being must also bring to bear a politics for egalitarian social relations. In many cases, teachers encourage students to use hypertext and CMC in the project of the teacher's conception of democratic or liberatory education.⁴ Students often have other agendas. Knadler's research on hypertext points out that not everyone is willing to "play" with cyborg subjectivities in chats because they have worked so hard at being comfortable and empowered in the subjectivity they have created in real life. The disjunctions between cyborg theory and practice require that feminist cyborg instructors pay more attention to how online chat environments and hypertext by themselves do not create cyborg subjectivities at the interface.

The differences between theory and practice have implications for the subjectivity of the instructor in the computer classroom. Feminist cyborg instructors who want to gain the liberatory benefits of hypertext and CMC for their students may need to do more than simply provide student-centered classrooms with assignments and projects utilizing these technologies; namely, feminist cyborg pedagogues may need to use their authority to persuade students to engage effectively with various self constructions and to help students to be responsible for the cultural, political, and social effects of such play. In "On Becoming a Woman: Pedagogies of the Self," Susan Romano argues that teachers who wish to use CMC in service of "pedagogies of the self" need to do more than simply rely on "chance teaching" in MOOs. She suggests that instructors use their rhetorical authority to "assist the development and maintenance of equitable discursive environments" online (250). For Romano, the rhetorical concept of *sprezzatura*, a characteristic of the "oscillating, contradictory self, whose artful instability constituted decorum," may help instructors think

about their role in the online classroom. The cyborg-as-trickster may be another useful concept to help feminist pedagogues construct their classroom selves. While continuing to explore the cyborgian potentials of emerging CMC technologies, we need to step back from the individual technologies and get a better understanding of the teacher's subjectivity in context with the technologies.

Cyborg Reconfigurations of Rhetoric

Traditional notions of academic essays assume the author is a unified subject expressing mastery over discursive material with the purpose of shaping or persuading the reader, and such modernist assumptions fail in postmodern theories and particularly in cyborgian theories. Cyborgs speak from multiple, contradictory locations; they see knowledge as competing versions of "truth" held in tension; they are dispersed subjects. As such, cyborgs challenge the canons of both rhetoric and composition; they blur the boundaries between author/reader and text/context, deconstructing the foundations of the rhetorical triangle. Researchers reconfiguring rhetoric explore the potential of cyborg writing and rhetoric to be better suited to the social, political, cultural, and technological contexts of today's students, teachers, and researchers than traditional writing and rhetoric.

Margaret Daisley and Susan Romano in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at an M-Word" enact cyborg writing in order to interrogate the metaphor of the margin. Daisley and Romano's piece works as a model of cyborg writing in several key ways. First, the two authors purposefully write from an ethos that is dispersed by using the first, second, and third person; writing a dialogue between Thelma, Louise, Cynthia Selfe, Donna Haraway, and Gayatri Spivak; writing a dialogue between themselves and then with their daughters; writing

as teachers and then as students. Daisley and Romano in dialogue bring up the cyborg as a “new, powerful, cyberfeminist image” and then raise two challenges to cyborg theory (340). First, they question whether the cyborg as a myth is too unrealistic and metaphorical to be of value for “finding out how real people deal with their relationships with technology” (341). Secondly, they wonder whether cyborg imagery that evokes “hope for progress in the future through the union of man and machine” might turn instead into stories more like Frankenstein’s or the Terminator’s, where forging together man and machine results in “disappointment and destruction” (340-341). They raise the issues but do not resolve them.

This activist feminist text explores what marginalization means by refusing to offer one version of truth. Instead, Daisley and Romano offer many different possibilities for truth depending on the perspective of the speaking subject. Daisley and Romano pay attention to lived experience and avoid erasing differences. For example, Daisley relates her experience with a Japanese American student whose name means Many Beaches and describes how his refusal to participate in online discussion made her think about him as inhabiting the margin (332). Rather than allowing Many Beaches as a person to remain unknown, she returns to his story a section later and relates specific details about his life inside and outside the classroom (334-335). By refusing to allow Many Beaches to be simply a metaphor, she refuses to erase the differences about him that mattered. In both form and content, Daisley and Romano enact cyborg writing and find thirteen different ways or vignettes that embed their experiences with margins and technology in local contexts, local knowledge, and local discourse.

Such embeddedness is also important in Michelle Ballif’s work, “Writing the Third-Sophistic Cyborg: Periphrasis on an [In]Tense Rhetoric.” Ballif argues that we need a new

conceptualization of rhetoric that takes into account the postmodern experiences of today's citizenry. When all of the elements of Aristotelian rhetoric (the triad and the "times") have been seriously challenged by postmodernism, a third sophistic movement is needed, one that does not keep at its heart humanistic power relations dominated by language (Ballif 52-56). Neither radical democracy nor neopragmatism will get us to a useful pedagogy in her view. Ballif describes the Third Sophistic Cyborg as a figure who, unbound by time or foundational meanings, negotiates a rhetorical situation "by *metis* rather than by *techne*" (67). Employing the rhetorical technique of periphrasis, she argues around the need for an intense rhetoric that takes into account not only traditional rhetorical concepts, like *techne*, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, but also elements from sophistic rhetoric, such as *metis*, "a knowing, doing, and making not in regards to Truth (either certain or probable), but in regards to a 'transient, shifting, disconcerting and ambiguous' situation;" *tuche*, chance; and *kairos*, an opportune or right moment (Ballif 53). A cyborg, then, is a rhetorical figure who continually re-forges selves in relation to ever-changing challenges and resistances embedded in a particular situation and time.

Though Romano, Daisley, and Ballif likely represent white middle-class women's play with subjectivity and knowledge, I see their work as promoting a relentlessly specific historicity and as attending to both lived experiences and discursive constructions. However, Catherine Chaput in "Identity, Postmodernity, and an Ethics of Activism" discusses Michelle Ballif's interpretation of "Haraway's cyborg as not merely a hybrid identity but as *identityless*" (47). Furthermore, Chaput finds that Ballif "argues against teaching academic discourse or any other communicative method." (47). Since Chaput's own pedagogical suggestions rest on material Marxist critiques, it is not surprising that she would find that

Ballif's theories erase the very difference from which collective political activism can be accomplished under Marxist constructs of power. One possible limitation, then, for cyborg rhetoric is the contention that cyborg subjectivity is identityless and therefore not an effective subjectivity for dealing with the real differences among women and their relationships to technology.

The pedagogical impact of re-conceiving rhetoric and composition through this lens of cyborg theory is considerable. Even Ballif acknowledges that part of what was appealing throughout history in the rhetorical triangle is its teachability, but the pedagogical issues go beyond her acknowledgment. How do we teach students how to speak from dispersion, especially when speaking from a unified subject position is challenging enough? How does one teach students concepts like *metis*, *tuche*, and *kairos*, when *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are already challenging for them to grasp? In order to write alternative rhetorics, students need to be familiar enough with the conventions of academic writing and rhetoric to break them. Encouraging such experiments might further our interests as feminists but not further the interests of the students in increasing their mastery of academic discourse or the interests of the university in having students who can perform in the discourse community of the university.

These same arguments arise when talking about electronic texts, but electronic texts have different conventions and are already outside traditional academic discourse communities. There is a lot at stake when we encourage radical textual production, especially when it is in a print format. Furthermore, though not discussed by Daisley, Romano, and Ballif, reconfiguring rhetoric has implications for the subjectivity of the feminist teacher. If we think of instructors as skillful rhetoricians reading and responding to

the rhetorical situation of the classroom, then as cunning cyborgs, instructors would pay attention to *metis*, *tuche*, and *kairos* and hold multiple, partial versions of truth while tactically shifting identities, purposefully blurring boundaries, and responsibly negotiating the disparate power relations between margin/center, student/teacher, and student/student. Thus, from research considering cyborg writing and rhetoric, one can begin to theorize the impact of cyborg subjectivity for the feminist instructor, but more research and discussion is needed in order to consider the practical details of constructing teachers as cunning cyborgs in the computer composition classroom.

Cyborg Pedagogies—Connecting Theory and Praxis

Composition and rhetoric scholars have begun to theorize what it means to take cyborg theory into the classroom as a form of pedagogical praxis. I distinguish here research discussed above that suggests using specific technologies, like hypertext and CMC, to help students explore cyborg subjectivity from research that directly attempts to enact cyborg theory more broadly in the classroom. Only a very few researchers have taken up the challenge. Below, I discuss two articles that describe at least one concrete suggestion for bringing cyborg theory to our students for their benefit—teaching them to read across borders and engage in resistance to oppressive practices and teaching them to author against the conventions of cyberspace.

In “Race, Class, Gender, and Communications Technology,” Carol Winkelmann reflects on her and her students’ experiences in a seminar on electronic literacy, in which she purposefully created a series of assignments informed by Haraway’s cyborg theory. She asked her students to read a personal narrative from Sheila, an African-American woman

who was a battered woman at the shelter where Winkelmann volunteered. Winkelmann transcribed Sheila's story and uploaded it onto Usenet and had her students respond in an electronic newsgroup. The students argued about whether Sheila or her daughter were cyborgs, and there were outbursts of anger at the injustice of both promise denied and opportunities thrown away in the woman's story. Winkelmann celebrates these outbursts because she hopes that by exposing her students to this "icon" or cyborg figure she can move them to action. This is clear in her interpretation of one of her student's responses:

Brandon realized that the way out of our moral morass, our involvement and implication in the social injustices embodied by Sheila and her daughter, was to drop the artifices of our middle-class lives and forge connections, seek political unities, across the chasms of classism, racism, and sexism. (13)

Brandon acknowledges his differences from Sheila but feels compelled to act.

Winkelmann's formulation of cyborg pedagogy is, then, to promote an "*infidel heteroglossia*" by encouraging students to cross boundaries and critically engage the material conditions of those they encounter at the contact zone. Though Winkelmann's use of Haraway's complex cyborg figure sometimes seems too simplistic—especially in her treatment of Sheila as cyborg—she attempts to retain some of the complexity of Haraway's theory.

In contrast, James A. Inman, in *Computers and Writing: The Cyborg Era*, draws from Donna Haraway, Chris Hables Gray, and Anne Balsamo and defines cyborgs as "individuals, technologies, and the contexts they share" (14). He uses this condensed definition throughout to redefine the computers and writing field as a community, to tell the history of

pre-1979 computers and writing scholarship, to recast accepted histories of computers and writing, to define a new cyborg literacy, to outline a cyborg pedagogy, and to point to future research in the field. He argues that cyborg histories and cyborg narratives can offer competing notions of the evolution of technologies and individuals in computers and writing.

For my purposes, the most important contributions are his ideas about cyborg pedagogy. He defines cyborg pedagogy as a pedagogy that responsibly attends to the material conditions of our students, “an activist pedagogy that draws on individuals, technologies, and their shared contexts all at once to promote equity and diversity” (Inman 212). He further explains that cyborg and critical pedagogy are closely related because they share the goal of empowering learners and helping them become active participants in shaping radical democracy (Inman 215). He then describes an example of one of his assignments that enacted cyborg pedagogy.

He had his students design “ugly” websites that were in some way counter to the types of professional sites that populate cyberspace, and the sites had to include at least four of the following: various fonts, multiple colors, multiple formats, internal and external links, images, backgrounds, audio clips, video clips, and e-mail links (Inman 258). His rationale for this assignment is:

- Majority students are likely already to be familiar with conventions of hypertext and elements of hypertext design because they have more access to cyberspace;
- Majority students who create hypertexts against Web conventions might feel discomfort and question these emotions; and
- Student-created “ugly” websites neutralize the access advantage that majority students probably have.

He emphasizes the difference among his students and the complexity of his interactions with them in his interpretation of their “ugly” sites. He does this in order to explain that reading these web sites also involved knowing quite a bit about the people who authored them and their material background. He acknowledges that for teachers cyborg pedagogy may involve risk-taking and counter-institutional goals; however, he feels that for those teachers whose “first priority is the growth and development of their students and if some courage can be reasonably mustered amidst high pressure environments, cyborg pedagogy offers an important and powerful option in the computers and writing community” (227). Again, activism, attention to diversity and equity, and understanding our students in their full context constitutes Inman’s notion of cyborg pedagogy.

Winkelmann and Inman show that there are potentially effective ways to bring cyborg theory into the classroom. Their practical applications also have some limitations. Inman’s definition of cyborg is quite watered down from the complex being that Haraway describes. Inman points out his “ugly” websites “are not the best for strict grading, departmental standards, and institutional goals and commitments” (227). It is unlikely that the assignment really equalizes differential advantages across class, race, gender, and sex differences. Winkelmann’s approach to cyborg pedagogy certainly begs ethical questions about exposing Sheila, a homeless, recovering drug addict, to the rhetoric of predominantly white-middle class university students. Winkelmann shared her students’ responses with Sheila and soon after Sheila overdosed on drugs (14). She recovered but did not return to the shelter (Winkelmann 15). The two are not necessarily related, but Winkelmann still struggled to make sense of Sheila’s actions and has defended her use of Sheila and her story against charges of exploitation. Lastly, both Inman and Winkelmann describe their experiences with

cyborg pedagogy through analysis of particular assignments but do not address the cyborg pedagogue's role in the classroom.

Implications from the Literature

Reviewing the ways that the cyborg has figured in the literature on computers and composition illustrates a gap in the literature and some of the limitations of previous adoptions of cyborg theory. Though feminists in composition studies have addressed cyborg feminism as a suggested form of subjectivity that positions the teacher-researcher as an activist-critic, a critical tool for critiquing hypertext and CMC technologies, a guide to re-conceiving rhetoric and writing, and a possible new form of pedagogy, these adoptions often focus on the benefits of cyborg theory for students and largely do not address either the potential for cyborg theory to inform the feminist instructor's subjectivity in the classroom or a consideration of how feminist cyborg instructors might translate theory into practice. As I have indicated, the constructions of Romano's sprezzatura as an instructor's rhetorical authority, Selfe's nomadic feminist cyborg guerilla as a "persona," and Ballif's Third-Sophistic cyborg as an embedded, cunning rhetorician have implications for the cyborg instructor's subjectivity but these are more like suggestions than full treatments of a complex issue. Furthermore, most of the research focuses on using cyborg theory in response to technology, ignoring Haraway's second goal with her "Cyborg Manifesto," helping feminists work through the many differences among feminisms. In Chapter IV, I theorize how cyborg subjectivity can inform a feminist pedagogy in the computer classroom and illustrate through an extended scenario some of the practical details of the cyborg feminist way of being in the classroom.

However, before moving to my own construction of feminist cyborg pedagogy, several of the limitations of previous adoptions of cyborg theory illustrated in this review need to be addressed and overcome. Several researchers challenge Haraway's cyborg theory on the grounds that the theory promotes a subjectivity that is identityless and is not responsive to the real problems people have with technology. Both of these challenges, I believe, are related to interpreting Haraway's cyborg theory. In addition, my review illustrates a wide variety of operational definitions of cyborg theory. As I pointed out in the introduction, Haraway describes cyborg subjectivity:

- 1) the cyborg writes in order to engage oppression at the level of language,
- 2) the cyborg exists as a border being to break down binary dualisms,
- 3) the cyborg finds connections and community through affinity and kinship,
- 4) the cyborg shifts identity in the manner of trickster figures.

However, each of the approaches discussed above takes up no more than a few of the fundamental ideas that Haraway discusses as a "whole" figure in her manifesto. Most of the work does not treat Haraway's cyborg theory as a holistic system of liberatory practices, and such an oversight has led to the exclusion of any significant treatment of the cyborg as trickster and its role in negotiating differences between cultural, Marxist, and socialist feminist pedagogy. Therefore, in order to overcome the limitations, largely related to interpretation, of previous uses of feminist cyborg theory and to fully realize the oppositional potential of feminist cyborg theory, in Chapter III I rearticulate Haraway's cyborg theory through the lens of Chela Sandoval's methodology of the oppressed.

CHAPTER III: REARTICULATING CYBORG FEMINISM

Rather than relying solely on my own interpretation of cyborg theory, I turn to the work of Chela Sandoval for help with interpreting Haraway's mythical cyborg. Specifically, Sandoval's own theory of differential consciousness and methodology of the oppressed when read with Haraway's cyborg theory can clarify the skills that cyborgs employ, explain more fully the role of the cyborg-as-trickster in conceiving feminist cyborg subjectivity, and contribute to a better understanding of the cyborg as a system of tactics promoting egalitarian social relations. Also, as Chapter II indicates, Haraway's feminist critical theory of technoscience overshadows her contribution in the "Cyborg Manifesto" of an effective feminist subject that celebrates multiple, partial feminist tactics. Sandoval's work helps to bring Haraway's contribution to feminism into specific relief.

Though Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" was published in 1991, nine years before Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed*, both theorists attempt to articulate new theories of oppositional consciousness in order to alleviate tensions among practitioners of different brands of feminism that threaten to divide feminism to the point of inefficacy as a social movement and in response to the new power structures evident in our postmodern times.⁵ Whereas Haraway theorizes tricksters, affinities, joint kinships, and cyborgs as tools for feminists, Sandoval theorizes her own related terminology of "differential consciousness" (a revision of her earlier "oppositional consciousness") and "methodology of the oppressed." Drawing from Sandoval's work, I establish in the following discussion a kinship between

Haraway's cyborg theory and the methodology of the oppressed, including the five technologies that make up her methodology.

Haraway seeks an oppositional consciousness in the late twentieth-century world where power is seen in terms of a "grid of control" imposed by technology's drive to reduce life to codes, and a similar purpose drives Sandoval's work. The aim of her work in *The Methodology of the Oppressed* is "to consolidate and extend what we might call manifestos for liberation in order to better identify and specify a mode of emancipation that is effective within first world neocolonizing global conditions during the twenty-first century" (2). Sandoval finds commonality among the theories of prominent cultural critics by viewing critical theory works as "manifestos for liberation." Sandoval's work draws heavily upon critical theory from a broad array of theorists: Frederic Jameson, Frantz Fanon, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Audre Lorde. The "mode of emancipation" that Sandoval argues for is differential consciousness and social movement, which she feels is an effective set of oppositional practices or technologies.

Sandoval explores and critiques Frederic Jameson's work, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capital," in order to explain the logical flaws underlying Jameson's version of the postmodern crisis, the conditions of late capitalism that undermine the potency of modernist oppositional subjectivities.⁶ She reads the article as a eulogy for the lost foundations underpinning aesthetics, politics, and subjectivity under modernism (*Methodology* 23). She shows how, according to Jameson, modernist subjects with stable, coherent identities were able to distance their discrete selves from their environments and critically reflect with depth, oppositional efficacy, feeling, and style on the reality of their world (24). In contrast, in Jameson's view the "postmodern neocolonial cultural machine"

produces flat or superficial art, promotes intensity or euphoria, fragments subjectivity, and values technological reproduction (24). To Jameson, the colonizing drive of late capitalism flattens everything—academics, aesthetics, politics, difference, oppositional strategies—into consumer products that we then cannibalize or assimilate into the neocolonial machine (18, 24).

Sandoval, however, does not accept Jameson's despair over the postmodern situation. Sandoval sees Jameson's despair as stemming from a logical flaw in his argument, namely that Jameson only considered two possible alternatives for subjectivity—a modern subject with knowledge of itself in relationship to history or a postmodern subject with no sense/expectation of self at all. Sandoval instead argues that there is a third possible option which calls for inhabiting only “partially” both “the modernist/historicist” and “the poststructuralist/postmodernist position” (*Methodology* 34). This double consciousness is what oppressed peoples have come to employ expertly out of a need for survival. She argues that, if first-world citizen-subjects are beginning to feel the “fragmentation of the subject” and the oppressive effects of colonialism, then these first-world citizen-subjects are beginning to experience the same “psychic terrain formerly inhabited by the historically decentered citizen-subject: the colonized, the outsider, the queer, the subaltern, the marginalized” (26). Sandoval turns to third-world subjectivities as a source for her oppositional strategy.

U.S. third-world feminism is the matrix for Sandoval's theories of differential consciousness and social movement. Sandoval's use of U.S. third-world feminism slips among a couple of different definitions. One definition names a branch of feminism

developed in the 1970s by U.S. feminists of color that utilizes a “deliberate politics organized to point out the so-called third world in the first world ” (Sandoval *Methodology* 192 n1).

However, Sandoval employs an alternate definition of U.S. third-world feminism most often:

The theory and method of oppositional consciousness outlined in this chapter became visible in the activities of a political unity variously named “U.S. third world feminism,” “womanism,” or “the practices of U.S. feminist women of color.” U.S. third world feminism represents the political alliance made during the 1960s and 1970s between a generation of feminists of color who were separated by culture, race, class, sex, or gender identifications but who became allied through their similar positionings in relation to race, gender, sex, and culture. (192 n1)

The participants in this political alliance found unity through their oppositional practices rather than through their respective identities as African American, Latina American, or Asian American women, feminists, or womanists. The affinity and community that arise do so because each practitioner struggles with a similar purposeful “splitting” of identity or self, like Gayatri Spivak’s “strategic essentialism,” Gloria Anzaldua’s “*la conciencia de la mestiza*,” and Patricia Hill Collins’ “outsider/within” identity,” in order to “intervene in power on behalf of the marginalized” and fight for “egalitarian social relations” (60, 61, and 196-197). Sandoval considers the political commitment to an “outsider/within” identity in the service of egalitarian social relations as the hermeneutic of creating postmodern love, the basis of alliances and affinities (82). The oppositional practices that U.S. third-world feminists developed inform Sandoval’s idea of differential consciousness and social movement (60). This influence is most visible in that the practitioners did not align

themselves with any one form of hegemonic feminism; rather, they used whatever form of resistance was strategically necessary.⁷ In other words, she advocates moving “between and among” the various oppositional forms without specific allegiance to any but with an understanding that each position practices a “tactical essentialism” (62).⁸ As a way to describe effective skills or tools that support differential social movement, Sandoval proposes five “technologies” for her methodology of the oppressed: semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, differential movement, and democratics. Below, I relate in some detail each of Sandoval’s technologies to Haraway’s cyborg skills.

Haraway and Sandoval both describe the skills that are necessary for embodying their respective versions of oppositional consciousness. However, Haraway’s terminology is more imprecise and less well developed than Sandoval’s.⁹ Both theorists agree that the cyborg’s primary tool for disrupting perfect transmission is writing, writing that tells competing, historically specific narratives and breaks down distinctions between binary pairs. The purpose of cyborg writing is to engage oppressions at the discursive level, and Sandoval’s theorization of semiotics and deconstruction makes this purpose most clear. Semiotics, the reading of signs (S) made up of a signifier (Sr) and a signified (Sd), is one of Sandoval’s fundamental technologies, and she relies on Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* to frame her theories. Sandoval’s main interest in the oppositional practice of Barthes’ semiotics involves the second-level of signification that Barthes calls “mythology,” which Sandoval recodes as “ideology.”¹⁰ For both Sandoval and Barthes, semiotic mythologizing is an inner technology or type of consciousness, sensibility, and act that involves a subject being always prepared to risk experiencing the dominant ideology and, then, reading and decoding the artificiality of ideology to subvert colonial interests (*Methodology* 103). Sandoval, through

Barthes, treats the second technology, deconstruction (“the deconstruction of ideology”), as a sister technology to semiotics (“Sr/Sd/Sign reading”) (89-99).

Both semiotics and deconstruction are inner technologies, but meta-ideologizing, Sandoval’s third technology, is an outer technology that “works by grafting a *third-level* ideological system onto a dominant second-level system, and by using this resignification process as a tactic for challenging the dominant order of power” (*Methodology* 108). In other words, meta-ideologizing involves “*the ideologization of ideology*,” creating a new myth on top of the old one, in order to expose the artificiality of the original dominant ideology and/or to actively transform the ideology (108-109). In one example, Sandoval refers to Fanon’s title for his work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, as “a ‘meta-ideological’ operation: a political activity that builds on old categories of meaning in order to transform those same racialized divisions by suggesting something else, something beyond them” (84). The way that the editors of *Bitch Magazine* refuse to think of “bitch” as an insult and re-appropriate the term “bitch” in an empowering way by celebrating “women who speak their minds, who have opinions and don’t shy away from expressing them” is an example of meta-ideologizing in popular culture (“B Word”). For Haraway, feminist monster stories and cyborg science fiction do Sandoval’s meta-ideologizing work of “suggesting something else, something beyond.”

Haraway insists that cyborg being involves both refusing to be either/or human and machine and finding pleasure in moving around in the borders between. Cyborgs are “resolutely committed” to the vision and enactment of living in the borders out of a political and ethical belief in a utopian world without oppressions (Haraway 151). These two characteristics of Haraway’s cyborg mirror the final two of Sandoval’s technologies,

differential movement and democratics, which integrate all of the other technologies within her methodology of the oppressed.

Differential movement, in Sandoval's theory, is much like her concepts of differential consciousness and social movement, except that it operates at the level of language. Sandoval explains her fourth technology, "This manipulation of one's own consciousness through stratified zones of form and meaning requires the desire and the ability to move through one layer of Sr/Sd/Sign relationship and into another, 'artificial,' or self-consciously manufactured ideology and back again, movement that is . . . differential" (*Methodology* 110). Semiotics, deconstruction, and meta-ideologizing rely, then, on this transitive move which changes both the ideology that informed its temporary, partial position and the situation that the ideology acts on (110). Sandoval's linguistic technologies are not merely language play. She argues that her four methods for dealing with difference must involve an ethical and moral force that urges the erasure of dominance and inequity (114). This ethical and moral commitment to differential consciousness and movement is democratics, the fifth of her technologies. Thus, democratics is the push towards egalitarian social relations that "permits, drives, and organizes the methodology of the oppressed" (114).

The benefits for composition studies of viewing cyborg feminism through the lens of Sandoval's re-articulation of Haraway's cyborg theory and recognizing the rich theoretical ground that they share are many. Some scholars, like James Degan in "Whose Icon?" a response to Winkelmann's formulation of cyborg pedagogy, see Haraway's work as "inaccessible" to the point that "any message she has is congealed in a mix of jargon and polemic" (34). Though Sandoval's theory is still fairly jargon laden, some of her terminology, like semiotics and deconstruction, would be familiar to many compositionists.

Sandoval's work helps to distill some of the main themes in Haraway, and may help others tease out Haraway's message.

Many scholars, especially Marxist feminists, criticize the work of cyborg feminists for a lack of consideration of real material issues facing women today.¹¹ This problem often arises when scholars move from theory to practice. In both Haraway and Sandoval's work, material histories and actual lived experiences are key to the work they propose. Haraway references several "real-life cyborgs" in her "Cyborg Manifesto" (177). Sandoval uses an example from Barthes of a photo of an African boy dressed as a French soldier and argues that the way to break down the ideology of colonialism in the photo is to go in and change the boy from a symbol to a real boy by telling the story of his life and his history (*Methodology* 98). In the process of undoing and redoing ideologies through semiotics, deconstruction, and meta-ideologizing, cyborg feminists participate in the project of paying attention to lived experiences of difference by exposing the nearly erased materiality and histories of discursive constructs and images.

Sandoval's concept of differential social movement and consciousness helps to clarify Haraway's suggestions for the trickster role of the cyborg in lessening divisions within feminism. Differential social movement hinges on the shifting among and between feminisms or other forms of social movement in order to do the work of that form—be it equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, or separatist—and to highlight the distinctions between the different forms for the purpose of changing the practices within that group. Sandoval points out how Haraway's cyborg is informed by "Native American categories of 'trickster' and 'coyote' being" (*Methodology* 168). She explains the relationship between the trickster and differential movement: "The cruising mobilities required in this effort demand

of the differential practitioner commitment to the process of metamorphosis itself: this is the activity of the trickster who practices subjectivity as masquerade, the oppositional agent who accesses differing identity, ideological, aesthetic, and political positions (*Methodology* 60). Within the social movement of feminism, trickster movement allows feminists to take up the form of opposition most useful to achieve the goal of egalitarian social relations and, then, move into another oppositional role; through the move, the differences between the two positions are made more apparent. Pointing out differences to ease divisions seems counterintuitive; by not having an allegiance to any one position and through the continual process of morphing, the trickster can enable affinities to form across differences of identity, aesthetics, and politics.

As I explain more fully in the following chapter, trickster/differential movement and cyborg/differential consciousness are what make a feminist coalition possible and are key to constructing a feminist cyborg pedagogy in composition. In Chapter IV, I draw out the implications of rearticulating cyborg theory through Sandoval's differential theory for the subjectivity of the feminist cyborg pedagogue in the computer classroom, describe how this subjectivity can be constructed from previous feminist metaphors for ways of being in the classroom, and explore several questions that arise from trickster-shifting in a technology-rich composition classroom through a practical scenario.

CHAPTER IV: IMPLICATIONS FOR FEMINIST CYBORG PEDAGOGY

As the previous chapters have shown, compositionists have largely not explored how feminist cyborg theory can help us to theorize an effective feminist subject position for the teacher in technology-rich composition classrooms. I have also connected the absence of such treatment to misappropriations or misapplications of Haraway's theory. Reading Haraway through Sandoval more clearly defines Haraway's feminist cyborg as both a way of being that employs trickster shifting and a set of skills for critical intervention. I propose that this rearticulated cyborg can be an effective subject position for feminist composition teachers in a networked computer classroom. Thus, my answer to the initial research question draws out the implications of two key characteristics of cyborg subjectivity—trickster/differential movement and oppositional methodology—for actual classroom practice.

For Haraway and Sandoval, cyborg and oppressed subjectivity, respectively, were answers to the problem of finding an effective oppositional consciousness or "way of being." Both theorists view liberal, Marxist, cultural/radical, and socialist feminist practices and strategies as effective when seen as partial answers to the problems that contemporary feminists face. They do not propose throwing out previous feminist contributions altogether but rather suggest that we employ different types of feminisms partially and tactically through differential social movement or cyborg trickster shifting, the first key characteristic informing a feminist cyborg pedagogy for networked composition classrooms.

Sandoval's conception of differential consciousness does not dismiss previous oppositional strategies. Instead, she argues that the differential mode of consciousness involves movement through the four other oppositional forms of ideology, the equal-rights, the revolutionary, the supremacist, and the separatist forms. Each form can be employed without privileging one over the other (Sandoval *Methodology* 55). Through her detailed discussion of U.S. third world feminists' (U.S. TWF) affiliation with "the 1970s white women's liberation movement," she shows that U.S. TWFs "also enacted one or more of the four ideological positionings just outlined—but rarely for long, and rarely adopting the kind of fervid belief systems and identity politics that tend to accompany their construction" (58). U.S. TWFs did not have the same "fervid belief systems and identity politics" as hegemonic white feminists because no one of the traditional feminist approaches—liberal, Marxist, radical/cultural, and socialist—fully accounted for differences across people and because U.S. TWF contributions to each phase of hegemonic feminism were marginalized and often excluded (50-54). Sandoval quotes from Audre Lorde to highlight how ideological differences that separated hegemonic feminists are, for differential practitioners, "a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativities spark like a dialectic" (60). In order for the previous oppositional strategies/stances to be effective in a postmodern world, they need to be understood not as "mutually exclusive," as most hegemonic white feminists understood them, but as enacted in "dialectical relation to one another" through differential movement (56, 59).

Haraway, too, contends that feminists need to view individual feminisms as only effective when viewed as partial responses. She argues that feminist taxonomies, which typically include radical, liberal, and socialist feminism, play an important role in

maintaining divisions among feminists because feminists tend to think that any one type of feminism could provide all the answers to the problems facing women today. She writes, “Beyond either the difficulties or the contributions in the argument of any one author, neither Marxist nor radical feminist points of view have tended to embrace the status of a partial explanation; both were regularly constituted as totalities. Western explanation has demanded as much; how else could the ‘Western’ author incorporate its others?” (Haraway, “Cyborg” 160). Haraway critiques Marxist and socialist-feminist approaches for relying on the essentializing Western humanist narrative of labor and “women’s activity” and critiques radical feminist approaches for erasing differences among women by essentializing what counts as women’s experience (158-159). Haraway acknowledges that the failures of previous feminism(s) were in utilizing “the logics, languages, and practices of white humanism” and looking “for a single ground of domination to secure our revolutionary voice” (160). Haraway contends that cyborg subjectivity can be an effective feminist move as long as it means trickster morphing through multiple possible feminist stances.

Rather than completely dismissing previous conceptions of feminist composition pedagogies or relying on only one feminist approach, feminist cyborg pedagogues would employ the “cruising mobilities” of trickster and differential movement to shift among and between several feminist ways of being in the composition classroom. In the history of feminism and composition, many metaphors for feminist subject positions have emerged: mother, midwife, mestiza, bitch, laughing medusa, wise-woman, netgrrl/geekgrrl/riotgrrl and, recently, cyborg.¹² Each of the metaphors of feminist pedagogies demonstrates multiple combinations of commitments and practices that are possible in classrooms. For example, cultural feminists might speak about framing their behaviors in terms of motherhood or

midwifery metaphors. Postmodern feminists prefer, instead, to think of the teacher's role in the classroom in terms of the bitch, mestiza, or laughing medusa metaphors. Moving differentially, then, cyborg pedagogues could enact these different ways of being to suit the rhetorical or educational situation. These moves would be partial, temporary, and tactical.

Conceptually, I think about the feminist cyborg pedagogue trickster morphing or differentially moving through a menagerie of possible feminist ways of being in the composition classroom. Haraway uses this notion of a menagerie in *How Like a Leaf* to talk about how she uses her different critical metaphors (OncoMouse™, primate, and cyborg) (139-147). For feminists in composition, our menagerie could be filled with various ruling metaphors for different feminist pedagogies. Cyborg subjectivity allows us to see multiple feminist metaphors for classroom practice as historically contingent possibilities shaping the feminist teacher's identity.

However, we would be repeating the failures of previous feminisms and misappropriating Haraway and Sandoval's theories if we were to uncritically or naively adopt previous feminist stances that were grounded in white humanist narratives which encourage the kinds of discrimination and oppression at the heart of "patriarchy, colonialism, humanism, positivism, essentialism, scientism, and other unlamented -isms" (Haraway, "Cyborg" 157). One of the commitments of cyborg and differential consciousness—and the second characteristic necessary for formulating a feminist cyborg pedagogy for composition—is to use the tools or skills that Haraway and Sandoval offer as oppositional methodologies to read, critique, open up, and transform oppressive power relations, whether in the culture at large or within feminisms.

For Haraway, part of trickster moving through previous feminist stances means using cyborg skills, such as inhabiting the borders between dualisms, telling competing narratives, and writing monstrous cyborg stories, in order to reassemble previous feminist stances into more effective tools for promoting egalitarian social relations. Sandoval advocates employing her five technologies and differential consciousness to transform power systems through reading ideologies, opening them up to multiple meanings, and creating more empowering artificial ideologies. She makes it clear that her oppositional consciousness involves:

. . . the ability to conceive of the equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatist ideologies as *constructed* by the oppressed in liberatory action, to understand them as forms of consciousness that are themselves readable, inhabitable, interpretable, and transformable when necessary, and to recognize their structural relations to one another through an overgirding theory and method of oppositional consciousness, that comprises the fifth and differentially acting form of consciousness and activity in opposition. The differential form of oppositional consciousness is both another mode of these oppositional ideologies and at the same time a transcendence of them. . . This is a transitive, revolutionary activity born out of a differential political practice, a strategy comprised fully of tactics. It is a self-conscious and transitive movement of mind, of middle-voice reflexivity that is required for this kind of operation, if one is to fully understand and utilize semiology as a practice for the emancipation of the imagination. (Sandoval, *Methodology* 183-184)

Sandoval depicts a double activity of both inhabiting established feminist oppositional modes and reading those previous modes as “*constructed*” ideologies that need to be reconceived and re-empowered to improve them and construct them anew (emphasis in original). She explains that employing semiotics, deconstruction, and meta-ideologizing while moving differentially through oppositional tactics are transitive actions that both work toward the goals of each oppositional mode and transform the mode itself for the better. Thus, using the cyborg’s oppositional methodologies to critique feminist stances and to transform them when needed is the second key cyborg characteristic shaping the subjectivity of feminist cyborg pedagogues in composition.

For feminists in composition, developing a cyborg teacher-subject involves forming a sensibility committed to continuously reading and recreating the ideologies of language, politics, culture, academic disciplines, and technology that shape our experiences and behaviors in the classroom. The mode of oppositional practice that feminists use tactically to guide their construction of themselves and their educational goals would be an important subject for analysis, critique, and recoding. In other words, as part of the process of cyborg being, the feminist metaphors populating my menagerie would need to be explored with Haraway’s cyborgian critical tools and/or Sandoval’s technologies. The purpose of deploying these oppositional methodologies is not to discredit previous or competing feminist approaches or to hierarchically position one or another approach over others; rather, the goal of such readings and re-articulations is to create and engage the most effective tactics within the different oppositional forms: equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatist. Within feminist composition studies, there has been significant debate about which metaphor for feminist practice is the most effective and best fits the experiences of teachers today.

This kind of infighting and wrangling has in many ways created conceptual hierarchies and is well illustrated through the history of the mother metaphor for feminist pedagogy.

The mother metaphor has been critically challenged by Marxist and socialist feminists, like Eileen Schell, bell hooks, Theresa Enos, Laura Brady, and Susan Jarratt, to the point that it has been largely discredited as an effective and valuable feminist pedagogical stance. It is important to understand how the once promising motherly pedagogue evolves in the composition debate into the beleaguered figure it is today. The mother metaphor entered the composition conversation via consciousness-raising feminist groups of the sixties and seventies, which established a foundation for the beliefs that personal expression is an important source of knowledge production and that supportive, nurturing environments provide women safe spaces for this knowledge production. In “Feminism and Composition: A Case for Conflict,” Susan Jarratt explains how, in the field of composition, the simultaneous rise of expressivist and feminist pedagogies in the late sixties and seventies strengthened the commitment of writing teachers to provide their students with nurturing spaces for sharing their own experiences (Jarratt 110-111).

In the 1980s, cultural feminists began to add further traits to mothering pedagogies. In Cynthia L. Caywood and Gillian R. Overing’s renowned collection of essays, *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity*, the authors employ a revisionist approach informed by both liberal and cultural feminism to open up traditionally masculinist composition pedagogy to feminine ways of writing and the experiences of women. In one of the collection’s essays, “Transforming the Composition Classroom,” Elizabeth Daumer and Sandra Runzo suggest encouraging collaboration, fostering creativity, engaging as a non-judgmental audience, teaching women’s language, listening to women’s voices, and

responding to individual student needs as maternal practices for feminist teachers. Cultural feminist theories of mothering in the classroom involve teachers actively engaging students in traditionally undervalued “feminine” kinds of writing, collaborating, and listening. Furthermore, as Eileen Schell points out in “The Costs of Caring: ‘Feminism’ and Contingent Women Workers in Composition Studies,” some cultural feminists also considered women as more capable of the kind of nurturing, detailed, repetitive work that composition pedagogies required. Providing safe spaces for free exchange of personal experience, nurturing student’s fledgling literacy acts, valuing women’s writing and voices, and celebrating traditionally undervalued “feminine” abilities were all promising aspects of maternal feminist teaching arising out of supremacist oppositional modes.

By the mid 1990s, feminists in composition were challenging mothering pedagogies on several grounds. Marxist feminists, like Schell, argued that the costs of mothering were too high because, by idealizing the maternal practices of being “supportive, nurturing, and facilitative,” contingent writing instructors were privileging their teaching experiences to the detriment of their careers as scholars (84). Specifically, composition instructors were overworked and, therefore, found little time for research and publishing, which led to continued exploitation of non-tenure track instructors (89). At the institutional level, the mothering metaphor helps to maintain composition’s feminized position as tirelessly and passionately performing the “women’s work” of socializing and preparing students to function as members of the academic community (Susan Miller; Richard Miller).

Socialist feminists, informed by postmodern theories of politics of location and Paolo Freire’s theories of critical pedagogy, contended that mothering pedagogies were based on white middle-class values and did not effectively deal with differences across race, sex, class,

and ethnicity (Jarratt, “Case”). They also argued that the goals of maternal practice, especially nurturing students and valorizing feminine language and learning, essentialized the category of Woman to the point that individual differences among women were erased (Brady; hooks). Socialist feminists viewed the essentialized appropriation of feminine characteristics as having the opposite effect from what cultural feminists hope for; rather than breaking down divisions between masculine and feminine language, technologies, or behaviors, privileging the feminine maintains the divide between the two and further marginalizes the feminine (Brady). Furthermore, feminist critical pedagogues critique the power structure in maternal practices, since authority remains centered, though challenged and often undermined, in the figure of the mother-teacher and infantilizes the students.

While this has been a rather long example, I think it fully illustrates the degree to which mothering pedagogies have been discredited and shows the hierarchical privilege of feminist critical pedagogy and other pedagogies arising from Marxist and socialist feminisms. Not only was the mother metaphor discredited, the cultural/radical or supremacist mode of opposition was also discredited and superseded by stances from the revolutionary mode. However, through the lens of Sandoval’s differential theory and Haraway’s cyborg, the history of the mother metaphor in composition works as a cautionary tale, not for the valid criticisms of the metaphor but for the decimation of a potentially promising tactic.

Creating a cyborg feminist teacher-subject entails moving differentially through several equally effective feminist tactics or metaphors formed out of the equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatist modes of opposition and re-reading and revising those tactics when necessary to make them more true to the goal of democracies. While I

advocate here taking up previous feminist contributions to composition pedagogy, new tropes and metaphors for feminist pedagogy will continue to emerge, and cyborg pedagogues will need to read, interpret, inhabit, and transform these new figures. Thus far, I have drawn out the implications of cyborg theory for forging a teacher-subject in the composition classroom; however, in order to answer my central question about how cyborg theory can help us create an effective feminist subjectivity—or multiple, partial effective subject positions—for the technology-rich classroom, one last complication must be considered, the technology-rich context.

Trickster morphing from metaphor to metaphor, in the current discussion, also takes place in the technology-rich classroom where cultural narratives involving feminine metaphors and technology are part of the discursive and embodied context at play in the classroom that affects the authority of the cyborg pedagogue. In addition, technology may be utilized to support, undermine, and complicate the ideologies behind different feminist metaphors in vastly different ways. The challenge, then, for feminist cyborg-teachers is not only to actively assemble, disassemble, and reassemble themselves but also to employ Haraway's cyborg skills or Sandoval's technologies to read each of the metaphors for their complex relationships with technology and to transform these relationships when necessary.

Before explaining my methodology for meeting this challenge, I need to provide a brief note on terminology. Thus far, I have been using terms and concepts from both Sandoval and Haraway in order to establish a close connection between the theories, a purposeful conflation. In Chapter 3, I tried to rearticulate cyborg theory by establishing a kinship between Haraway's cyborg and Sandoval's differential consciousness, and above, I explained how differential and cyborg consciousness theoretically can inform a feminist

pedagogy for composition. However, as I move to take up more practical complications with technology in the classroom, using and discussing both sets of terminology becomes too cumbersome. In the following discussion, I keep the cyborg as the privileged term, but often operationally conflate Sandoval and Haraway's terminology for subjectivity and tactics. In my mind, this move is justified because both the cyborg and oppressed subject are metaphors for colonized subjectivity in late capitalism under postmodern flattened grids of power. Whereas Sandoval's oppressed subject is colonized by political, aesthetic, and cultural aspects of late-capitalism, Haraway's cyborg helps us focus on the role of technoscience in imposing and subverting power in a postmodern world. As I analyze previous feminist pedagogies in composition for their effectiveness as postmodern techno-tactics and their relationships to technology, I use a combination of both Sandoval's methodology of the oppressed and Haraway's cyborgian techniques to explore a feminist cyborg pedagogy.

The following section is a start at meeting the challenge of determining what cyborg subjectivity may look like in actual practice. Using cyborg techniques, I analyze three feminist metaphors from the composition literature for their problems and potentials in the networked composition classroom: the mother, bitch, and midwife.¹³ Due to the scope of this project, I can not interrogate motherhood, bitchery, and midwifery fully as effective tactics in the technology-rich classroom; instead, I think of my analytical moves as playful gestures that can point to the tensions and ambivalences that the relationships between technology and each stance may engender and that can suggest effective new couplings and splices. Before discussing the relationship of technology and each individual metaphor, I describe what it means to teach from that oppositional subjectivity and how each stance is a transformation of earlier versions of the stance. When appropriate, I try to transcend

previous ideologies that no longer are effective by creating “artificial” ideologies or meta-ideologizing. I guide and limit the discussion by addressing a few questions for each metaphor: (1) What would each stance feel like to the feminist teacher in the technology-rich classroom? (2) In what ways may this stance be empowering in a technology-rich classroom? (3) In what ways may this stance be limiting in relationship to technology? My answers to these questions may involve pulling examples and support from diverse sources.

Composition literature will provide classroom-based understanding of experience.

Scholarship from other academic disciplines and popular culture productions (ads, articles, books, and movies) will provide cultural narratives that affect both teachers and students.

Finally, I try to weave in a scenario that demonstrates trickster and differential movement from one stance to another, highlights the kind of situation where the present mode of opposition no longer fits the currents of power, and describes the benefit of shifting gears into another subject position.

Moving Differentially Through the Menagerie

Imagine an instructor preparing her syllabus for a semester of Freshman Composition who wants to employ the kind of cyborg feminist pedagogy outlined above, and her choices of ways of being in the classroom are drawn from the three sample figures, mother, bitch, and midwife. She considers mothering pedagogy as predominantly representing the supremacist form of consciousness-in-opposition. In her view, the ideological tactic of bitch pedagogy is revolutionary, and the teacher-midwife enacts an equal-rights mode of oppositional consciousness. One of the central questions swirling in her mind is: How can I employ these three different modes of consciousness to support my goals in the composition

classroom? She reviews the goals of Freshman Composition provided by the writing program at her university. In this case, the goals are: to teach civic argument, to introduce various genres of civic discourse, to teach the conventions of academic writing and research, to provide practice in critical reading and thinking, to improve electronic literacies that facilitate communication and increase audience awareness, and to provide instruction in Standard Written English and varieties of style. She also reasserts her commitment to achieving these goals while pursuing a cyborg feminist agenda of helping students understand their relationships to language, technology, culture, and academic institutions as constructions related to gender, class, race, and sex that are both liberatory and oppressive and helping students to develop the critical sensibility of Haraway's cyborg and Sandoval's differential consciousness, which asks individuals to actively engage with their world through reading, writing, and re-creating the symbolic systems around them for the purpose of establishing egalitarian social relations. In addition to the goals of composition and cyborg feminism, she knows that her approaches to general feminist composition practices in writing classrooms, like encouraging collaboration, privileging process over product, questioning conventional forms of knowledge production, valuing personal experience, paying attention to the dynamics of who speaks and whose words are heard, and playing with voice and genre, will shift to some degree as she moves differentially from one subject position to the next.¹⁴ Balancing these goals and thinking abstractly about how she wants to move through the menagerie, our instructor decides to begin the semester in a motherly stance in order to promote community, to then move to the bitch stance to challenge her students to be responsible for their words and behaviors in relationship to the community,

and then shift to the role of midwife-teacher to encourage her students to meet her as equal participants in the classroom.

Taking this scenario as a model, I want to move now to explore the rationale behind the decision to shift from mother to bitch to midwife, to analyze how these shifts can be effective, and to consider the complicated ways that the technology classroom can impact the three subject positions. Beginning with the mother, we need to understand why our instructor may feel that maternal pedagogy as a supremacist consciousness-in-opposition builds community and how mothering in the classroom, given the many criticisms of its previous incarnations, can be reconfigured as an effective feminist tactic. Then we can consider what the technology-rich classroom would feel like for cyborg mother-teachers and how it can be both empowering and oppressive.

Mother

Mothering pedagogies of the 1980s and early 1990s were informed by cultural and radical feminism and, as stated earlier, not only provided nurturing spaces for sharing experiences and valued women's voices and writing but also maintained patriarchal cultural, political, and academic hierarchies which further marginalized feminine practices and characteristics. Though cultural and radical tactics fell short of their subversive goal, by valuing women's abilities, experiences, voices, writing, and language over masculine traditions, cultural/radical mothering pedagogues were able to create a sense of community based on female identity. Some feminist compositionists argued that women's feminine abilities and qualities made them better suited for writing instruction than men. Sandoval explains that "under 'supremacism' the oppressed not only *claim* their differences, but they

also assert that their differences have provided them access to a higher evolutionary level than that attained by those who hold social power” (57). Within composition, these early mothering pedagogies were enacting a supremacist form of opposition. However, as critics have pointed out, the model of identity celebrated by maternal pedagogies represented idealized white-middle class motherhood and femininity. Many African, Asian, and Hispanic American women did not identify with that model and were disinclined to participate in communal celebrations of what they viewed as privileged and exclusionary femininity. The promise of building community through supremacist opposition still remains, but we need to renegotiate the valued figure(s) at the center.

Transforming the mothering metaphor into an empowering myth for cyborg teachers and an effective tactic for building community involves revising our understanding of connecting, nurturing, and loving. As cyborg pedagogues committed to networks, we are trying to help our “children” forge cyborg subjectivities where they understand themselves as both colonized and colonizer and can form community through affinity and love. Sandoval explains that the refusal of singularity and oneness “can be understood as a complex kind of love in the postmodern world, where love is understood as affinity—alliance and affection across lines of difference that intersect both in and out of the body” (170). So, in order to build the kind of affinity community that Haraway supports based on the shared experiences of assembling and disassembling selves, we would need to help students develop both self-love across the differences within the self (colonizer/colonized, human/machine) and love of others across the differences among people (race, ethnicity, region, religion, sex, gender, class). The supremacist consciousness-in-opposition is one effective way to help colonized people come to love themselves through celebrating the qualities and capabilities that have

been erased, censured, and devalued; however, cyborg feminist pedagogues need to encourage the exploration of a variety of oppressed differences not just idealized white-middle class femininity.

Consider again our writing instructor, who out of a desire to encourage such exploration and celebration, creates an assignment that asks students to read a short essay or book chapter that explores the relationships between writing or education and various gendered identities that they can relate to from their own experiences. For example, the instructor provides a list of possible works celebrating the various colonized identities of her students—African, Asian, Hispanic, Native, and White American heterosexual and homosexual women and men. A technology component of the assignment asks students to find spaces online where active communities respond to popular culture representations or celebrate the histories and practices of the racial, gendered, sexual, ethnic, and/or regional identities that they see as parts of themselves. The assignment asks the students to write a reflective essay that ties together their own experiences of writing and learning with those of the published author and online communities. The instructor intends to publish the essays on a class electronic discussion board. The instructor's goal is to get the students actively and lovingly engaging with their constructions of themselves and listening openly to the similar processes of other students. In order to help the students through this very difficult project of self-awareness, the mother-teacher uses her authority in the classroom to promote a safe space of honest and open sharing.

At the same time, we also need to be careful in constructing our mother-teacher so that our construction reflects the cyborg teacher's own self-love. At the heart of the cyborg mother-teacher is a utopian belief in the power of love to heal, strengthen, and teach. In

order to explore how we might love our students and how this love might manifest itself in classrooms, I turn to bell hooks's work, *Salvation: Black People and Love*, where hooks discusses how love has the power to help black people transcend decreased spirituality, "white supremacy," emotional abandonment, negative black cultural representations, and poor self-esteem. She proposes that "to heal our wounded communities, which are diverse and multilayered, we must return to a love ethic, one that is exemplified by the combined forces of care, respect, knowledge, and responsibility" (4-5). She talks extensively about the need for black people and scholars to use the tools of decolonization to read and create knowledge and to be responsible for their identity constructions through political activism and self-love, moves that are similar to Haraway and Sandoval's cyborg and differential consciousness. Hooks's treatment of respect, care, and self-love help us to reconceive earlier mother-teacher constructions. Hooks writes, "When we identify respect (coming from a root word meaning 'to look at') as one of the dimensions of love, then it becomes clear that looking at ourselves and others means seeing the depths of who we are. Looking into the depths, we often come face-to-face with emotional trauma and woundedness" (28). "Respect" in hooks's terms means being honest with ourselves and others about our emotional wounds so that we can heal the wounds through trust, intimacy, and love (30-31).

Healthy self-love is integrally tied to hooks's conception of caregiving, especially for black women. She argues, "neither the opportunistic, greedy, self-involved diva nor the long-suffering maternal martyr represents self-loving womanhood. To choose love, we must choose a healthy model of female agency and self-actualization, one rooted in the understanding that when we love ourselves well (not in a selfish or narcissistic way), we are best able to love others" (41). In general, she sees caretaking as nurturing one's own and

another's self-actualization, sustaining intimate emotional attachment, encouraging in one another a strong sense of self-love and responsibility, providing material necessities, and teaching non-materialistic values. When we compare hooks's vision of an ethic of love extolling the importance of respect, care, knowledge and responsibility to earlier feminist constructions of mother-teachers idealizing the mother figure as self sacrificing, nurturing, eternally loving, and devoted to her children to the exclusion of her own needs, we can see an alternative vision of mothering for feminist cyborg teachers that does not take at its heart an unhealthy white middle-class idealization of motherhood.¹⁵

For the cyborg pedagogue taking on the role of mother in the classroom, an ethic of love means modeling for students self-love and love of others, using authority in the classroom to create an environment conducive to students' respectful, deep, and honest exploration of their subjectivities, encouraging students to develop cyborgian, postmodern love of the self and Other, and teaching students the tools of decolonization (e.g. cyborg consciousness) to help them take responsibility for and engage with knowledge. Furthermore, cyborg mother-teachers must balance developing intimate, nurturing teacher-student and student-student relationships with their own genuine needs of self-love, self-acceptance, and self-actualization. Committed feminist cyborg pedagogues believe in student's abilities to take themselves seriously and to explore the possibilities of postmodern love.

How would cyborg mother-teachers feel in the technology-rich classroom?

Though cyborg mother-teachers would understand postmodern nurturing and caretaking as an empowering vision of self-love and oppositional activism, they are likely to experience the networked-computer classroom as an oppressive space that makes it difficult

to maintain the healthy boundary between being supportive and being self-sacrificing. Even in traditional classrooms female teachers struggle with cultural assumptions of expected feminine behavior and cultural devaluation of mothering. Since so many media messages still try to tell women, especially mothers, that they should always be self-sacrificing, tirelessly devoted caretakers—kind, forgiving, compassionate, and accepting—the female mother-teacher has to have very healthy self-love and self-esteem and be an emotionally well person to constantly fight such media representations. Also, despite discussions with students about postmodern love—the kind of non-sentimental love cyborg mother-teachers want students to consider—students, especially first-year students, may devalue and de-authorize a female teacher nurturing and teaching out of love.

The risks of de-authorization and self-sacrificing in traditional classrooms are compounded in technology-rich settings due to cultural narratives concerning gender and technology. Representations of mothers and technology in advertising and popular media often depict idealized visions of domesticity and motherhood and maintain ideologies that hierarchically arrange gendered work, privileging masculine and devaluing feminine roles. In “Lest We Think the Revolution is a Revolution: Images of Technology and the Nature of Change,” Cynthia Selfe argues that utopic visions of technology’s potential to affect positive changes in both globalization and gender inequality are not being realized in our culture. She supports this claim by analyzing computer advertisements and showing how, even in late 1990s depictions of women and technology in computer advertising, traditional 1950s gender roles are idealized. Selfe finds that “the Same Old Gendered Stuff narrative” operates to constrain women’s technology use to a limited group of tasks in “appropriate settings: to enrich the lives of their family and to meet their responsibilities at home—as wife, as mother,

as seductress, as lover; within a business setting, women use computers to support the work of their bosses—as secretaries, executive assistants, and loyal employees” (307). Women’s use of technology is service rather than leadership oriented; therefore, women’s roles with computers are devalued. In her sample, there were more ads that upheld traditional gender roles. Selfe found no ads that told empowering narratives heralding technology’s potential for change. In the 1990s, “the Un-Gendered Utopia story” was a competing cultural narrative advertisers could have used, specifically highlighting technology’s potential to help us work outside “limited gender roles” and find ways to value and reward more equally “men’s work and women’s work” (306). For cyborg mother-teachers, images that suppress storylines where technology can help create a more egalitarian society and, instead, promote women using technology in traditionally gendered supportive and nurturing ways may make it hard for them to think of their own motherly approach as authorized, valued, and empowering.

Furthermore, without empowering narratives of true gender equity, media representations of mothers and technology mythologize the potential for mothers to take on increasingly more work—a vision of empowerment through efficiency that encourages even more self-sacrificing. When the computer industry first started targeting ads toward female consumers, they tried to encourage women to view computer technology as a tool that could help them have both a healthy family life and a successful career.¹⁶ Thus, by making it easier to stay connected to work and to manage the many responsibilities at home, technology could empower women to achieve the same quality of life as men by allowing them to “have it all.” Today’s images of mothers as supermoms are even more potent than June Cleaver.

Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels, in *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Has Undermined Women*, argue that media coverage creates unreasonable expectations of mothers, “new momism,” and masks the very real needs of many mothers for better treatment by the government and society at large. Douglas and Michaels contend that supermom is “advertisers’ rendition of the liberated mother,” who chose to “embrace feminism *and* intensive mothering” (57, 84). They consider the supermom as but one step in a “long-term propaganda campaign [that] began in the 1980s to redomesticate the women of America through motherhood,” similar to the 1950s, post-World War II media campaign celebrating women’s maternal and domestic identities (9). With the help of Martha Stewart, this latest campaign presents a version of motherhood “in which we are meant to sculpt the carrots we put in our kids’ lunches into the shape of peonies and build funhouses for them in the backyard; this has raised the bar to even more ridiculous levels than during the June Cleaver era” (9). Douglas and Michaels focus their analysis on popular culture representations in general, but when we consider the ideology of new momism in relationship to the ideology of empowerment through efficiency of technology, it is clear that cyborg mother-teachers face even greater potential for self-sacrificing in the technology-rich learning environment. Thus, the supermom ideology operating in relationship to technology adds another layer of signification to the self-sacrificing, underpaid, and undervalued mother figure that cyborg feminist pedagogues would need to be able to decode and to subvert in the technology-rich classroom.

In what ways may technology empower maternal cyborg instructors?

While feminist cyborg maternal pedagogues would be fighting against pervasive narratives of women and technology that promote idealized visions of nurturing and self-

sacrificing, the technology-rich classroom also has the potential to empower cyborgs through network connections. Many people's experiences with technology speak to feelings of increased intimacy and connection through CMC. For example, Charles Moran and Gail E. Hawisher in "The Rhetorics and Languages of Electronic Mail" discuss how "e-mail as a medium can create the illusion of intimate, private communications" (88). In their discussion, Moran and Hawisher reference research supporting the "warmth" of e-mail communication: the high incidence of virtual sex in MOOs and MUDs, the feeling on listservs of interacting in "close-knit" groups as if long-time buddies, and the companionship created by discussions that are "more 'socially oriented' than 'task oriented'" (88). Moran and Hawisher suggest that e-mail can provide a space for teachers to present personas different from their classroom demeanor; teachers can "enhanc[e] their effectiveness as teachers" when they "use their e-mail teaching space to express different and complementary aspects of themselves" (93). While inhabiting the role of mother, cyborg pedagogues may find e-mail a useful medium for being more personal with their students than they are in the classroom and for voicing their opinions that may be more confrontational or challenging than they want to express during class time.

Other CMC forms, like synchronous and asynchronous chat, can empower maternal cyborg teachers in the technology-rich classroom. Cynthia Haynes' cyberfeminist virtual pedagogy employs MOOs to encourage students to engage in shape-shifting and language immersion. The potential for pseudonymous play with the constructions of the self may also help students form intimate connections, especially when they are encouraged to cross borders and reflect on their experiences. I found in my own experience as a student with a MOO session in a course that the exchange was intense and engaging because, with each

submitted message, I felt as though I risked being silenced by the multiple competing voices. At the same time, comments could provoke numerous fast-paced responses. It felt like a textual performance of a constructed self with all of the related pleasures and disappointments of having a live audience. Since many researchers, like Stephen Knadler and Susan Romano, point to minority resistance to such shifting, instructors would need to use their rhetorical skills and authority, as Romano suggests in “On Becoming a Woman: Pedagogies of the Self,” to encourage students to playfully cross identities and to think critically about their experiences. The ability to leave the markers of the body behind and construct multiple identities may, as Moran and Hawisher postulate, allow cyborg mother-teachers to nurture through CMC “a new kind of relationship here, with overtones of the postmodern—uncommitted intimacy” (90).

Technology-rich classrooms also provide opportunities for cyborg mother-teachers to build a learning community and to expose students to alternative community spaces on the Web. Class discussion boards can make it easier to share student texts and to encourage community responses to those texts. Some teachers advocate having a discussion board solely for students to talk without teacher mediation and supervision, which allows for discussion beyond the time limitations of class schedules. Some instructors, like Elizabeth Burow-Flak, advocate having students co-create course websites through suggesting links, creating personal homepages, maintaining the course site, and writing group hypertext essays or projects. Furthermore, many politically aware groups have taken advantage of the Web by creating online activist communities. Feminists in composition have often pointed to the liberatory potential for women’s spaces on the Web and even highlighted specific sites as useful resources (Gerrard; Hocks; Haas et al.). The World Wide Web houses a wide variety

of affinity and identity activist communities dedicated to working towards egalitarian social relations. Cyborg mother-teachers can encourage students to inhabit these alternative spaces and to participate, whether through lurking or posting, in the communities. The networked-computer classroom empowers cyborg mother-teachers by supporting one of the central goals of postmodern nurturing—creating and sustaining community.

In what ways may cyborg mothering with technology be problematic?

In the networked computer classroom and even outside the classroom, the cyborg mother-teacher would use technology in some part to mediate teacher-student and student-student intimate, caring relationships. While many ads and articles depict the usefulness of technology as tools for managing and informing nurturing activities, from breast pumps to PDAs, baby monitors to cell phones, skin-implanted identity chips to wearable computers, not many mainstream images show visions of mothers or women actually using technology to create or sustain intimate emotional attachment, because advertisers and marketers do not want consumers to be discomfited by mothering with machines. Why would cyborg loving be taboo? Does technology mediation change the very experience of human emotional bonding into something inhuman?

Some mother-teachers may feel that technology has the potential to change what it means to be human, especially when we are considering using technology to mediate close human interactions like love, caring, and nurturing. Jaimie Smith-Windsor's "The Cyborg Mother: A Breached Boundary" is a moving personal account of Smith-Windsor's experience of the premature birth of her daughter and her daughter's first 69 days as a cyborg on a ventilator. She describes her prevailing sense that cyborg existence is nihilistic:

The day I gave birth to a cyborg, I began to understand how every human has become a collaboration of machinic and biological matter. The human condition is mediated by technology. The meta-narrative of being cyborg ignores ethical questions. The machine can't ask: what would the world look like without mothers? Or, for that matter, fathers? Technology is, quite literally, beginning to rewire the way we do family, the way we know humanity. The ultimate violence of technology is its ability to generate its own invisibility, to circulate undetected in and through the physical body to become manifest in the human consciousness as epistemic reality. Conditions of possibility other than becoming cyborg are thus, [*sic*] hidden from the human condition. (Smith-Windsor)

For Smith-Windsor, cyborg nihilism means that technology erases human values, like family and morality, and dehumanizes being. She contends that technology becomes the privileged term in the human/technology binary pair, as evidenced in one example by the way her baby's body is altered to fit the design of the technology. Michel Foucault's concept of the panopticon is central to Smith-Windsor's vision of cyborg being: "Discovering the panopticon within exposes a thinly disguised operation of sovereigntist [*sic*] power. Cyborgs do not write themselves, technology does. The fusion of machine and body is the manifestation of the panopticon, the eternal reification of a bounded human identity" (Smith-Windsor). Technology confines human being by exposing us to the state apparatus of the "technological gaze" that can see-without-being-seen. Surveillance encourages self-imposition of state/technological rules. For Smith-Windsor, this "internalization of the panoptical technology means that humanity can never imagine being autonomous." Mother-

teachers may utilize technology to help build community, to increase emotional connection, and to encourage playing with self constructions, but they may also find that the technology negatively impacts, perhaps not to the extreme degree that Smith-Windsor describes, the human activities of nurturing, conversing, connecting, and playing.

The “technological gaze” has further implications for the mother-teacher trying to encourage and sustain intimate, respectful connections with and among students. The fear of being watched, censured, and misinterpreted could inhibit the exchange of intimate, honest discourse. Teachers’ communications are subject to university or institutional surveillance, and student-to-student communications could be available for teacher or other student surveillance. Moran and Hawisher highlight the potential for e-mail to be read by audiences that were not intended (86-88). While working with students to increase their self-awareness and self-acceptance, many delicate subjects may be brought up by students, like sexual harassment, racial discrimination, sexual or physical abuse, and mental illness. In trying to work with students across issues, teachers would need to exercise good judgment about their tone and words that will be digitally recorded and could be shared by the student with other students or read by university administrators. It is unlikely that any unprofessional or untoward discourse would occur, but there is the possibility that administrators could misinterpret messages originating out of a postmodern ethics of love.

Lastly, though cybermother pedagogues can explore the liberatory potential of online communities, there are several limitations mother-teachers need to consider about virtual communities. When teachers encourage students to visit and possibly join alternative online gathering spaces, supposedly safe spaces, teachers can be exposing students to commercialism, harassment, and silencing. Some activist groups have members-only

community spaces, and students might feel compelled to pay a membership fee in order to access these areas. Some groups do not have the resources to purchase Web space, so they use free internet applications from sites like Google or Yahoo, which are full of advertisements and require registrations. Even for alternative online communities, capital and commercialism can influence the content and design of sites in ways that are counter to the politics and activism of the sites themselves.¹⁷

Another concern for mother-teachers is that many of these sites are routinely flamed by people with sexist, racist, and elitist beliefs, and students who visit alternative sites for class projects can become victims of such harassment, as was the case for one of Mary Hocks' female students described in "Feminist Interventions in Electronic Environments." Hocks' student was in an *Ebony* chat room on AOL researching for an assignment, received an Instant Message from a hostile white male who sexually harassed her, and felt compelled to leave the room (111). Even in communities of like-minded people, such flaming frequently occurs and can silence some participants. Silencing can also occur due to gendered differences in rhetorical style or speech preferences. Some students may not find activist communities on the Web for their particular affinity kinships, perhaps due to lack of access within marginalized groups. In "Virtual Community: No 'Killer Implication,'" Andrew Feenberg and Maria Bakardjieva review research on online communities and point out that "in defiance of both optimists and prophets of gloom, [online forums] are rarely either uplifting or degrading and much more often simply amusing, instrumental or inconsequential" (39). Clearly, online communities are not the utopic democratized spaces that they could be, and cyborg mother-teachers would need to be aware that, as they

encourage students to experiment with virtual forums, they are also exposing them to negative elements in cyberculture.

Reading Currents and Shifting Gears I

Though the technological context may promote postmodern caring and nurturing that maintains the boundaries of a teacher's self-love and self-acceptance, the combined pressures of media representations of nurturing with technology and of cultural stereotypes of self-sacrificing mothering behavior may become too confining for many instructors over time. Furthermore, as the goals of cyborg composition instruction shift from nurturing self-love and self-awareness in students to challenging them to be responsible for their relationships across differences in race, sex, gender and class to colonizing forces and to exclusionary practices, conflicts and opinions may come out that mother-teachers would feel uncomfortable directly confronting as loving nurturers. Recall our hypothetical instructor and her initial assignment, which asks students to explore their own identities in relationship to writing and academics and to listen to the reflections of their classmates. A subsequent assignment could be geared towards students beginning the task of locating themselves in relationship to others in the class and reading popular culture representations related to this community. As our cyborg teacher asks students to critically engage with each other across differences, it is possible that real deep-seated conflicts and emotions will arise that would be difficult to handle effectively with a mothering authority. In light of the change in instructional goal and the potential for conflictual flare-ups, she hopes her post-modern mothering has laid a foundation of genuine caring and connection capable of withstanding the pedagogical shift from the mother to a more effective subjectivity, the bitch as revolutionary oppositional consciousness.

Bitch

Before moving to an analysis of the intersections between technology and bitch-teaching, it is important to understand how bitch pedagogy is an effective oppositional tactic for feminist cyborg composition instructors. The following discussion addresses the conceptual figure of the bitch for feminist composition instruction in two parts. First, I describe what bitch pedagogy is as it relates to the cyborg teacher's subjectivity, classroom authority, and instructional goals. Second, I explain how labeling such a stance as "bitch" is a meta-ideological move that tells an empowering myth of female assertiveness.

Bitch pedagogy is a term I am using to label feminist praxis that directly advocates teachers using their authority to confront students, to create conflict, and to challenge oppressive ideas, language, and behavior in the classroom. In the use of this term, I am following in the footsteps of Andrea Greenbaum, who groups together Susan Jarratt and Dale Bauer's feminist sophistications, bell hooks's engaged pedagogy, and Dennis Lynch et al.'s agonistic inquiry as bitch pedagogies in "'Bitch' Agonistic Discourse and the Politics of Resistance" (152). Greenbaum pulls from these various sources in her articulation of confrontational pedagogies; however, for a brief overview of what bitch pedagogy entails in the classroom, I draw here only from bell hooks's theory of engaged pedagogy in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*.

Engaged pedagogy is in Sandoval's terms a revolutionary form of oppositional tactic where the ideological aim is "to lead society toward the goal of functioning beyond all domination/subordination power axes" (*Methodology* 56). The central goal of hooks's feminist pedagogy is "to transform society by eradicating patriarchy, by ending sexism, and sexist oppression, by challenging the politics of domination on all fronts" (*Talking* 50). An

engaged pedagogue believes that her commitment to confronting issues of sex, race, class, and gender is a “gesture of love” that is “rooted in the longing to make a world where everyone can live fully and freely” and is geared towards teaching the whole person “heart, mind, body, and spirit” (*Talking* 27, 49). This politicized vision of love echoes Sandoval’s and my cyborg mother’s postmodern love as outlined above. However, engaged teachers present a different face of love in the classroom. Instead of the effaced power in mothering, revolutionary feminist pedagogues embrace the power that their position in the university provides them in relation to their students and commit to using this power in ways that are not coercive and dominating (52).

One of the primary ways hooks advocates using teacher authority is to confront. Rather than nurturing through providing safe spaces to discuss personal experience, engaged pedagogues see conflict in the classroom as sites for critical intervention through direct, honest confrontation of ideologies of domination. One of hooks’s fundamental precepts is that coming to voice—knowing the political importance of speech as resistance and being able to write and speak as “self in relation” to our various fragmentations—is a first step in coming to critical consciousness (*Talking* 13, 31). She explains how she wants all of her students to be able to rise to the challenge of dialectics or “talking back” even in the face of fear:

My classroom style is very confrontational. It is a model of pedagogy that is based on the assumption that many students are afraid to assert themselves as critical thinkers, who are afraid to speak (especially, students from oppressed and exploited groups). The revolutionary hope that I bring to the classroom is that it will become a space where they can come to voice. (53)

Refusing to speak or read written material is not allowed in her courses (hooks, *Talking* 54). Engaged pedagogues value personal experience when students actively relate their processes of self construction as both oppressor and oppressed to the theoretical and informational content of courses (54). Through confrontation, speaking/writing, and personal confession, hooks's pedagogy transforms the learning process from an alienating experience into a stimulating experience that attempts to engage students—mind, body, and soul—in the political struggle of critical consciousness.

Labeling confrontational revolutionary feminist pedagogies like hooks's as bitch pedagogies is a meta-ideological move that tells an empowering myth of female assertiveness. Like the monstrous cyborg women in science fiction, bitch-teachers embrace a vision of femininity beyond the bounds of traditional norms of authority. For feminist composition instructors, as Greenbaum explains, appropriating bitchery for empowerment means acknowledging the fear of female power—the fear of emasculating, ball-breaking, nut-cracking women—at the heart of the epithet today, refusing to allow to masculine perception to construct or censure female power, and embracing the “bitchy,” supposedly unfeminine skills of rhetorical combat. Greenbaum argues that feminists have an ethical responsibility to their female students to model the arts of interruption and debate, since most young women do not have the self-esteem or skills to assert their own opinions and beliefs without hesitating, hedging, lacking confidence, or being verbally aggressive (159). Research in argumentation theory shows that modeling and teaching argumentation can help female students be more willing to enter into conflicts themselves, improve their class participation, increase others' perceptions of their credibility and leadership ability, and decrease their likelihood of being victims of domestic violence (Greenbaum 161-162). A

final empowering move of embracing bitchiness impacts female faculty; a feminist praxis of argumentation will help faculty members gain greater confidence in their own skills, be perceived more favorably by administrators and colleagues, and participate more fully in transformative democracies (Greenbaum164). Claiming bitch as a positive, empowering epithet enacts a cyborg technology that adds another layer of signification to engaged pedagogy and attempts to remove the stigma against powerful women engaging in rhetorical combat.

How would bitchy cyborg teachers feel in the technology-rich classroom?

Given the history of communications technologies as devices created for military use in “command-control-communication-intelligence,” C³I as Haraway calls it, and the general conception of cyberculture as frontier-like in its heightened confrontational expansion, cyber-bitch teachers are likely to feel empowered in the technology-rich classroom. Feminist work in cultural studies has examined the gendered bodies of cyborgs in film, specifically the way that cyborg films portray masculine fear of female sexuality and reproduction.¹⁸ Little or no critical attention has been given to popular culture’s mainstream film representations of bitchy women using technology assertively and as acts of resistance to traditional female norms of passivity and nurturance. While it is not within the scope of this project to do in-depth analysis of popular culture representations of bitches and technology, a quick look at female hackers in mainstream films suggests that empowering representations of assertive women using technology exist at least within the patriarchal parameters of sexualized female roles as side-kicks to male leads.

In “Penetrating Keanu: New Holes, but the Same Old Shit,” Cynthia Freeland sees Trinity, a celebrated hacker and Neo’s love interest in *The Matrix*, as a sexy babe whose

respected prowess as a hacker (spoken of but not depicted on-screen) and glorified gun fighting and martial arts skills are deployed to help fight for the liberation of humanity from the Matrix but which are overshadowed by her role as female side-kick and love interest to Neo (2009). While clearly powerful and eroticized, “She provides stereotypical female nurturance and ‘connectedness’ for the inexpressive, intact Neo” (2009). Likewise, in *X2: X-Men United* while fighting for mutant liberation under Magneto’s leadership, Mystique’s shape-shifting abilities help her to hack into Stryker’s confidential computer files, penetrate Stryker’s military complex, and take over the command and control center of the military complex. She assumes her true appearance (blue, scaly skinned and naked) as a refusal of norms of dress and identity. When asked why she doesn’t just always choose to look like somebody else, somebody normal, she responds, “Because I shouldn’t have to.” Mystique owns her own sexuality, enjoys confrontation, and acts on her beliefs in a more equitable society for mutants, but also she is Magneto’s side-kick and celebrated in the film for her “to-be-looked-at-ness.” Similarly, the female lead, Kate Libby, in *Hackers* is the confrontational and respected hacker that with lines like, “I hope you don’t screw like you type” and “That’s too much machine for you,” exudes confidence in her abilities as a hacker and in her own sexuality. She engages in a hacking competition with the male lead; if she wins, he becomes her slave doing “shitwork” for her on the computer, and if he wins, she goes on a date with him. Though Kate does not get as much screen time hacking code as the male lead and she loses the contest, she is clearly respected for her skills as well as for her sexy appearance. The male lead’s skill with code eventually is credited for saving the group from being arrested for planting a virus that they had nothing to do with; however, it is Kate’s insistence on getting help from the world-wide hacking community that ultimately saves the group from

imprisonment. Though they are not entirely free from patriarchal constructions, especially as eroticized bodies to be enjoyed for their “to-be-looked-at-ness,” as side-kicks to male leaders, and as forces of connection, Trinity, Mystique, and Kate are empowering examples of bitchy women using computer technologies aggressively to fight for their personal and political beliefs.

While cultural narratives of assertive women using technology within some constraints of patriarchy may help feminist composition instructors feel empowered in the technology-rich classroom, the erotic overtones of these representations could be problematic for feminist teachers. On the one hand, bitch-teachers would not want to be constructed simply as sexual objects to be looked at. On the other hand, as bell hooks points out in “Erotic Student/Faculty Relationships,” we do not have to construct women as only victims of sexuality—we are also subjects who can responsibly manage our sexuality in the classroom so that it is neither coercive and dominating for students nor simply a source of victimization for teachers. Hooks argues, “Passionate pedagogy in any setting is likely to spark erotic energy. . . . This erotic energy can be used in constructive ways both in individual relationships and in the classroom setting.” Jennifer Maher in “Hot for Teacher: Rewriting the Erotics of Pedagogy” agrees that desire in the classroom can heighten the learning experience for both hetero and queer men and women by seducing students to engage more fully with the content of the course (92). Cyborg bitch-teachers who feel that their actions and environment promote erotic overtones may choose to find the student gaze empowering and engaging, a meta-ideologizing move that reappropriates the term bitch in yet another sense—embracing the sexuality and sensuality that the initial epithet condemns.

In what ways may technology empower bitch pedagogues in the networked classroom?

The intimacy, speed, and multivocality of CMCs often encourage conflict and dialogic exchanges, which support the goals of bitch-teachers in the technology-rich classroom. Students who come to our classes experienced with listservs and bulletin boards may already be familiar with the kind of warfare rhetoric that, as was pointed out in Chapter II, Lambiase found on the OKLABOMB list and perhaps may have participated in online communities where confrontational dialogue is commonplace. When it comes to synchronous chat, many researchers have pointed out how students sometimes use aggressive discourse, like “wilding on” and name-calling, when discussing off-task and controversial issues (George; Kremers; Regan; Faigley). Such non-productive exchanges can be sites for bitch-teachers to engage students in rigorous debate. As Lester Faigley in “The Achieved Utopia of the Networked Classroom” explains, the postmodern discourse that online synchronous chat encourages “is inherently agonistic and to speak is to fight” (185). He argues that “electronic written discussions create dissensus because they give voice to diversity” not because CMC gives students more freedom of expression than previous modes of discourse (190).

In “Bodies in Place: Real Politics, Real Pedagogy, and Virtual Space,” Beth Kolko goes one step further by placing MOO space in relationship to Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of contact zones. Kolko argues that MOOs are politicized spaces for connection and conflict, where “the collisions of worldviews, of language, of cultural expectations are always in motion” (262). Students with a diversity of identity constructions in real life and in virtual space play, in Jean-Francois Lyotard’s terms, the game of language in the contact zone where they are working together in narrative collaboration, but “what causes the tension is the

struggle over who will dominate the narrative, or at least be able to have some effect on its outcome” (Kolko 262). Kolko views this language play as the serious work of dialogics and the most compelling reason to use “MOOplay” in the classroom. The heightened potential for conflict in CMC discourse promotes the goals of cyber-bitch pedagogues, since dialogics and dialectics are at the heart of bitch pedagogy.

Another central tenet of bitch pedagogy that networked technologies have the potential to forward is the goal of helping students take responsibility for their self-constructions across differences. While above I discussed the potential for disembodied play to encourage community and understanding of self-construction, here I refer more specifically to being politically aware of the multiple constructions involved in creating online identities and actions. Kolko argues that, when students engage in MOO discussions, they take with them into virtual spaces traces of their situated bodies, whether through the words they type, the programs they understand, or the descriptions they invent (258). For Kolko, whether students are participating anonymously or not, the power of MOOs is that teachers can help students be conscious of how the many layers of constructions affecting their situated, physical bodies relate to their virtual choices (259). Kolko characterizes some of these constructions: “As a typist manipulates a MOO character, the body that moves through cyberspace is a biological phenomenon sitting at a keyboard, and a political phenomenon that has gained access to the technology, and a social phenomenon that is interpolated as the social conventions of the typist’s environment and the MOO character’s virtual world” (259). Through MOOs or other CMCs, bitch pedagogues can teach students to be aware of the available choices and imposed restrictions that make up their situated and

partial selves, which is fundamental to creating the type of politicized critical consciousness hooks advocates.

In what ways may technology limit cyborg bitch-teachers?

Though the traces of students' offline situated selves may be apparent as students struggle to create online selves, pseudonymous dialogues are still problematic for the bitch pedagogue, who is interested in confronting students when their language and behaviors are racist, sexist, or homophobic or when their constructions are not honest attempts to wrestle with the real oppressions and privileges that accompany their identities. Teachers may not be able to or may not have time to follow the linguistic traces on transcripts back to the individual students that they want to challenge. Bitch-teachers want to encourage students to be responsible for their identity-constructions, language, and behavior, and if students are able to shift-identities pseudonymously, challenging students to be responsible becomes problematic. Faigley relates this difficulty to the “decentering of the subject in electronic texts.” Though Faigley himself does not advocate a modernist notion of “authentic” selfhood, he notes that “it is difficult for teachers to maintain a notion of students discovering their authentic selves through writing when student writers try on and exchange identities in electronic discussions, even from one message to the next” (191). Though he notes that pseudonymous discussion often “leads to even greater participation and self-disclosure,” he takes a cautionary stance towards the use of pseudonyms in classroom discussions—only using it once a semester in his own classes. Therefore, bitch-teachers may find pseudonymous discussions limiting and choose to use them sparingly or forgo them altogether.

Another challenge in the technology-rich classroom for bitch-teachers is that electronic discourse often de-centers authority in the classroom, and bitch pedagogues want to hold on to their power to shape discussions and to challenge students. Many researchers tout the electronic classroom as a more student-centered learning environment than traditional pedagogies that were teacher-centered, especially the potential for increased participation in discussions, more equal participation in discussions, more focus on student texts, and increased student-to-student collaboration. Often even the design of computer labs is intended to support student-centered learning (Taylor).¹⁹ Faigley describes how electronic classroom discourse may begin with the teacher choosing the topic and asking a question—as in offline classroom discourse—but once the discussion gets going and streams of comments and responses are scrolling by, teachers become like one of the students, and their voices may or may not be heard and responded to. He considers the wavelike structure of electronic discourse as following “the logic of late capitalism . . . Topics are introduced and consumed according to what students like at that moment and what they don’t like” (190). Exerting rhetorical authority in the fast-paced, consumer-oriented electronic environment can be very difficult for bitch-pedagogues.

Therefore, cyberbitch-teachers will need to decide whether to confront students online or offline. Instructors could read transcripts of electronic discussions for potential sites for intervention in oral discussions or interrupt electronic discussions with some oral discussion when conflict arises. In fact, the very markers of the body that electronic discussion flattens or displaces—voice, accents, paralinguistic cues, appearance, and audience gaze—may make the electronic experience of conflict less intimidating, which is why so many disadvantaged people feel more comfortable speaking (Faigley 182). Hooks

would not want to lessen the intimidation. Furthermore, for hooks, speaking and voicing are more embodied than the written words of her students, which is why she has them read aloud some of their written work. She wants students to overcome their fear of speaking publicly about their opinions with their own accents, hesitations, bodies, and voices (hooks, *Talking* 17). Rather than masking the forces silencing disadvantaged people and fighting to gain authority in electronic discussions, bitch pedagogues may find that they prefer to confront their students in direct oral discussions.

Finally, bitch-teachers would need to be careful about interpreting students' silence in electronic discussions or texts. If students have problems with access, either to Standard Written English or various computer programs, their silence in electronic discussions may be from an inability to keep up with the typing speed, the speed of the conversation, or the various computer commands. If a teacher reads these students' silence as fear of speaking, then she may confront the students and make them even more uncomfortable in the online environment. Another kind of silencing can occur when students engage in what Alison Regan calls "group censoring." Regan discusses an online exchange in her classroom that was on-task but was also rife with homophobic chatter. One student claims to have teasingly said, "why not join together and do a project on the death of homosexuals? Not by AIDS" (Regan). As the students responded to this comment, they responded as if everyone in their conversation was heterosexual and constructed a rhetorical context where, if there were homosexual students in the group, "they had no room to speak" (Regan). Since homosexuality is a form of difference that has no physical marker for us to see and with the high level of homophobia in our society, we need to be aware that "lesbian and gay writers feel alienated in our classrooms, and that alienated students are less likely to be empowered

to write, whether or not the subject matter covers lesbian or gay topics” (Regan). Though confrontational pedagogues would still want lesbian and gay students to come to voice, I think we would need to be compassionate about the effect of homophobia on homosexual students in our classrooms.

Reading Currents and Shifting Gears II

Turning again to our hypothetical feminist cyborg instructor, the analysis of bitch subjectivity and its relationships to technology would help our instructor be aware of key issues affecting her in the technology-rich classroom, like cultural narratives of assertive women and technology, an empowering vision of erotics in the classroom, the potential for technology to encourage dialectics and responsible self-construction, and the potential limitations of pseudonymous electronic discourse, decentering the classroom, flattening the emotional experience in online conflict, and interpreting silence in electronic discussions. As noted earlier, in addition to the instructor taking on the complicated cyborg subjectivity, one of the goals of feminist cyborg pedagogy is to help students develop their own revolutionary critical consciousness: cyborg consciousness.

And, again, as a cyborg teacher, she wants to move differentially to another mode of opposition when bitch pedagogy is no longer an effective tactic or has served its purpose. Our instructor feels as though the mother and bitch stances have limited her ability to express her full range of emotions and thoughts. In addition, she is concerned that showing only nurturance or denial of nurturance places her too neatly in the stereotypical dualism of mother versus bitch. She wants to move to a position that is a little less engaged and provides her a broader range of self-expression. She thinks that, through embodying the mother, she has helped students work on self-love and affinity community and, by taking on

the bitch, she has helped students understand their responsibility in constructing themselves and others as both colonizer and colonized. Now, she wants to give her students an opportunity to take their cyborg selves out to a broader audience than the classroom and to practice using their critical reading and writing abilities as political acts. She gives her students an assignment to write a hypertext document that will be published on the Web as a resource for students across differences in race, sex, gender, and religion on campus to help empower them. To support her own desire for a less constricting pedagogy and the goals she has for her students, she decides to shift from bitch to midwife pedagogy.

Midwife

Traditionally in feminist composition studies midwife pedagogy was a cultural feminist practice that was believed to better suit the way women learn than traditional banking methods. In their influential book, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, Mary Belenky et al. recast Freire's critical midwife pedagogue for cultural feminist practice and stress how maternal thinking frames the student-teacher relationship.²⁰ The teacher, who nurtures cognitive growth through encouragement and "belief" rather than conflict and "doubt," acts as a midwife by helping students give birth to acceptable ideas, texts, and truths. Not surprisingly, feminist midwife pedagogy has been highly criticized for the essentialism underlying Belenky et al.'s belief that nurturing, supportive, and collaborative education better suits female learning styles and the re-inscription of repressive stereotypes of femininity for feminist teachers. In order for the midwife to be a viable member of the cyborg menagerie, a new more empowering construction of the midwife figure needs to be explored.

In “Multivocal Midwife: The Writing Teacher as Rhetor,” a recent re-articulation of feminist midwife pedagogy, Phyllis Ryder, Valentina Abordonado, Barbara Heifferon, and Duane Roen offer a new vision of midwifery for composition that attempts to re-empower the metaphor for feminist compositionists. The central goal of multivocal midwife pedagogy is to teach students that they are co-constructors of knowledge and co-constructors of texts, and that the voices that work with students to construct and create subjective truths and effective texts are teachers, audiences, and cultural ideologies (Ryder et al. 41-45). Ryder et al. see this composition process as parallel to the work of actual midwives. According to Ryder et al., midwives bring knowledge of labor, experience with the craft of intervening in birth when necessary, critical insight into the cultural constructions of medicalized delivery, and trust in the natural abilities of mothers to know themselves, to know what they need, and to give birth to healthy babies. The parallels that Ryder et al. draw between actual midwives and composition midwives, then, are that midwives/teachers coach mothers/students during the birthing process of babies/texts and facilitate mothers’/students’ critical thinking about the cultural ideologies that shape the labor/writing process.

The latter process of reading “codes of culture, to interrogate those perspectives, and to understand the ideology inherent in the language used to name them” is parallel to actual midwives’ role in critiquing the “rhetoric of western medicine” and is similar to the critical consciousness that mother and bitch pedagogies promote (Ryder et al. 46, 47). This process is characterized by a sharing of authority where the midwife/teacher is not an “expert” but, rather, an equal collaborator, and the mother/student is not the sole creator but, again, an equal collaborator (Ryder et al. 42). In the role of coach or facilitator, midwife-teachers can choose not to intervene in the writing process unless they believe the student needs or asks

for help, and when they do intervene they have the option of nurturing the student's confidence or tentative ideas and/or engaging dialectically with the student (Ryder et al. 45-46). In the above mother and bitch stances, the teacher wanted to hold on to their power and authority in the classroom and to engage students in pedagogies of the self in which the process of writing was also a process of self-construction. In contrast, the midwife-teacher can slip into the roles of either mother or bitch but would do so within a context of shared authority and always with a focus on improving the health of the student's rhetorical text.

The multivocal midwife is an articulation of feminist midwife pedagogy that empowers teachers in several ways. First, as mentioned earlier, cultural feminist versions of midwife pedagogy limited female instructors to the essentialized role of the caretaker; whereas Ryder et al. conceive of a midwife-teacher as a coach who can use caretaking, confrontation, collaboration, and noninterference as tactics in the classroom. Furthermore, in traditional mothering pedagogies the mother figure's authority is typically devalued and effaced by her students, but multivocal midwives share authority not as devalued mothers but as respected wise counselors. Second, Ryder et al. also use the midwife metaphor to disrupt our discipline's narrative of composition as, like midwifery, "merely" untheorized practice and rhetoric as, like medical practice, scientifically reasoned theory. If we value the classroom as a site of knowledge making and theory creation, as Ryder et al. suggest, then we can value composition as a craft equally as vigorous as the science of rhetoric (36-37). In the sense that midwife teachers work to be considered equal to rhetoricians and promote equality between teachers and students as contributors to knowledge, feminist midwifery can be seen not as a supremacist form of opposition, like earlier conceptions, but as an equal rights or liberal form.

How would cyborg midwife-teachers feel in the technology-rich classroom?

While midwife-teachers in composition have been marginalized for practicing untheorized craft, our cultural narratives of real-life midwives have also been marginalized for their unscientific knowledge and practices of delivery and healing. Midwives today celebrate their marginalized status by considering themselves outsiders with specifically privileged positions from which to critique the ideologies of medical science and technology. Midwives view birth as natural and normal and educate mothers about the ways that technology interrupts the natural processes of pregnancy and labor. This education empowers mothers to know when to refuse the use of medical technologies. “Minimizing technological interventions” is one of the four objectives outlined in the “Midwives Model of Care” by the Midwives Alliance of North America (MANA), an influential professional organization for midwives (“Definitions”). Carrying the analogy from actual midwives into a construction of midwife-teachers, then, introduces several questions. What are natural writing processes when almost all students use word processing programs to write? Dennis Baron points out that pen and paper are also technologies. How, then, can midwife-teachers know what constitutes natural writing, writing without technology? How can a midwife-teacher who is supposed to “first do no harm” teach writing with technology if the instructor is unaware of the potentially harmful effects of the technologies?²¹ With questions like these, midwife-teachers would feel uncomfortable surrounded by the technologies in the computer classroom.

However, another related marginalizing cultural narrative of midwives may provide an empowering myth for midwife-teachers. Historically, midwives have been associated with and persecuted for practicing magic and witchcraft, since they used unscientific herbal

remedies, practiced quasi-religious rituals like incantations, amulets, or charms, and combined empirical observations with wives' tales to diagnose and treat mothers.²² Even today, traces of the association of witches and midwives exist in popular culture, literature, and even composition.²³ Feminist midwife-teachers could undermine the traditional stigma against and oppression of witches by reappropriating the powers of witchcraft for their own purposes.

In "Would You Rather Be a Goddess or a Cyborg?" Suzanne K. Damarin considers the possibilities of the goddess versus cyborg dichotomy that Haraway establishes at the end of her "Cyborg Manifesto" as metaphors for feminist teacher standpoints in technology-rich classrooms.²⁴ However, in order to avoid the limitations of binary thinking, she argues for a conception of teacher subjectivity as a three-dimensional spiral—"the spiral dance invites and requires the search for a 'third term,' in this case positionalities for teachers who are neither goddess nor cyborg, but who are always already both" (210). She offers the figure of the postmodern witch as one possibility for a third term. Damarin defines her postmodern witch as a woman with a witch's elemental knowledge of healing, shape-shifting, soothsaying, and transforming, a hag's boundary positionality, and a crone's wisdom and courage.²⁵ Thus, witches have the goddess' powers of transformation and the cyborg's powers of blurring boundaries and use these powers to demystify the technologies in their lives and classrooms (217, 218). Damarin alludes to the witches of Greenham Common, a group of peaceful women who protested the arrival of nuclear missiles in Europe at the Greenham Common AirBase in Newbury, Berkshire from 1981 to 2000, as an example of elemental resistance. The Greenham Common witches protested by using bolt cutters to cut down the fence around the base, forming a circle around the base while giving gifts like

pictures of their homes and embroidered items as tokens of their respect for life, and also darning the fence with brightly colored wool which obscured the soldiers' vision of the areas around the fence.²⁶ With deep knowledge of both nature and technology, a witch-teacher, "like the women of Greenham Common," looks for "the elemental aspects of technologies that make them vulnerable and invokes elemental powers against them" (218). She understands the code behind technologies and teaches her students how to hack with elemental knowledge the vulnerabilities in the code, using these powers against colonization and "releasing the Wild within"(218). In composition, then, midwife-teachers can embrace the previously oppressive witch narratives associated with midwifery and consider themselves powerful outsiders whose motto is demystification (218).

How may technology empower midwife pedagogues in the networked classroom?

The technology-rich classroom is an excellent environment for midwife-teachers to make the invisible elements of technology visible. As a response, in part, to the call within composition from Cynthia Selfe for teachers to not only use technology but also to be critics of technology, a significant amount of research unmasking the hidden effects of computer interfaces, word processing, and CMC is available to witchy midwife pedagogues. For example, in Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe's "The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones," the authors explain how interfaces are politically charged spaces mapped graphically and discursively with asymmetrical power arrangements. Selfe and Selfe highlight the marginalization of Otherness that occurs when operating systems privilege a desktop metaphor for files and directories, a white hand as a mouse pointer, and individual electronic ownership and storage of texts and information. Even the privilege that rationalism, hierarchical relationships, and logocentrism enjoy in computer

programming codes and conventions are aligned with traditionally Western patriarchal values (Selfe and Selfe, “Politics” 491). Selfe and Selfe also point to discursive constraints, especially in word processing programs. Most word processing software has English as the default language for menus, keystroking, and commands (Selfe and Selfe, “Politics” 488-489). Selfe and Selfe explain how non-English add-ons can be purchased for an additional sum, but the regular thesaurus, spell checkers, style and grammar tools will still exclude diversity of discourse by referencing only Standard Written English (“Politics” 489).

Other scholars point to additional ways that word processing invisibly impacts the writing process. In a review essay of word processing research in composition, “Making Word Processing More Effective in the Composition Classroom,” Ruth Goldfine discusses the potentially negative hidden effects of word processing on student writing and ways to help students counteract these effects. Six key writing processes—planning, reading, revising, detecting errors, and spelling and vocabulary—are negatively impacted by word processing, according to Goldfine. For example, students tend to revise sentence level issues rather than structural issues because spelling and grammar checkers highlight some errors immediately which encourages editing instead of revising, limited screen sizes impair students’ sense of spatial location in the text and make reorganizing text more difficult, and cleanly typed drafts can occur early in the writing process urging students to feel as if they are finished drafting (Goldfine 308-309). Subtly, word processing software can affect the entire writing process, either by making English the default language or by overemphasizing some of the stages in the writing process while deemphasizing others.

CMC applications and hypertext also often mask differential power relations and effects on student texts. In Chapter II, I referenced Johndan Johnson-Eilola’s discussion of

the blurring of distinctions between authors and readers of hypertext. Helping students learn about the differences between hypertexts and traditional essays would be an important demystification.²⁷ As discussed above in relationship to mothering and bitch pedagogies, helping students understand the roles that their physical selves play in constructing online identities for classroom discussions would be another demystifying move. Midwife-teachers as co-constructors of knowledge in the classroom would not simply want to take composition research to students wholesale but, rather, would want to work with students to explore ways that they can use their own experience and knowledge to demystify differential power relations and to expose positive and negative effects of technology on their writing processes and rhetorical acts.

Since midwife-teachers can adopt the tactics of mother and bitch pedagogues, they would also share some of the same technological benefits, such as the potential for increased intimacy and connection, shape-shifting among situated virtual and physical multivocal selves, and encouraging confrontation and dialectics. The issue of authority is also a shared concern for each feminist stance, with one major difference. Whereas in mother and bitch pedagogy the issue of decentering the classroom was a limiting aspect, for midwife-teachers the computer classroom supports the goals of sharing authority between students and teacher. Kremers, George, and Faigley view networked synchronous class discussions as dialogic exchanges that equalize the power differential between co-equal teachers and students. E-mail and on-line discussion boards provide students with spaces where they can easily share their writing and peer-editing documents and where they can contribute to the co-construction of knowledge without the physical presence of the teacher or the institution (classrooms and instructor's office) exerting unequal force.

The technology-rich classroom itself can help decenter the learning environment through both classroom design and visible connectivity to the world beyond academic borders, according to Roxanne Kent-Drury in “Finding a Place to Stand: Negotiating the Spatial Configuration of the Networked Computer Classroom.” Kent-Drury analyzes the difference between teacher’s and student’s conceptions of traditional classroom space and Internet-networked classroom space and concludes that both traditional and Internet-connected classrooms are actually spatially indeterminate areas whose boundaries reach beyond the academic institution; however, web connectivity makes the spatial indeterminacy of technology-rich learning environments visible (393). Such “global interconnectivity” leads to disorientation for many instructors: “Disoriented, the instructor can experience the sensation of having no place to stand, no central position from which to direct and focus the class” (Kent-Drury 387). Rather than asserting a modernist authority in a decentered postmodern space, Kent-Drury suggests that teachers help students understand their role in the “global community” through analyzing the demographics and content of internet sites, creating their own personal Web pages, and authoring collaboratively a class Website. She believes such a series of assignments refocuses the classroom without relying on illusions of a finite, discrete classroom space.

Furthermore, a midwife-teacher may find that her students may have more technological knowledge and savvy than she does, which would make it easier to share authority with students concerning technology applications and hardware. Angela Haas et al. in “Mentors Versus Masters: Women’s and Girls’ narratives of (Re)negotiation in Web-based Writing Spaces” argue for “fostering a mentoring relationship between students and teachers” in electronic learning environments rather than a “mastering” relationship, where

one person hoards knowledge and shares it with others through traditional top-down banking methods of educating. Haas et al. believe mentoring is part of a critical feminist pedagogy, because women and girls benefit from developing interpersonal relationships during the mentoring process to offset the seeming isolation of computing and from engaging in “nonlinear ‘play’” with technology to counter traditional “linear exactness” in learning technological skills. Whether decentering occurs due to the use of CMC, the indeterminacy of Internet-connected labs, or the mentoring model of technology training, midwife-teachers can capitalize on the potential for sharing authority in the technology-rich classroom.

In what ways may technology limit cyborg midwife-teachers?

Midwife pedagogues in the networked-composition classroom would experience some of the same limitations of technology as bitch pedagogues—problems with pseudonymous online discussions, decreased emotional/personal investment, interpreting silence—and mothering pedagogues—nihilism and surveillance. The latter issue, surveillance and control (related to Foucault’s panopticon), complicates the potential for co-equally sharing authority in the technology-rich classroom and affects midwife-teachers across their other roles of facilitator, mentor, and coach.

In “The Persistence of Authority: Coercing the Student Body,” Todd Taylor discusses how, no matter how liberatory our pedagogy may be, we often undermine our own goals with efforts to control and surveil our students. According to Taylor, the “microphysical web” of power is apparent in the architecture of the classroom, our attempts to physically get students together in groups, and our attempts to keep students on task. For example, Taylor describes how, before his class begins an online discussion session, he explains conventions of netiquette and public discourse and informs his students of his “ability to store and retrieve

transcripts of these exchanges and that these transcripts will be used to enforce policy as well as to encourage everyone to participate fully in class” (116). Taylor labels these instruments of control as the “electronic panopticon” because the students not only internalize his rules but also “micromanage each other without [his] having to crack many whips” (116). Thus, we may want to think about the computer classroom as a space that supports the illusion of student-centered pedagogy better than traditional classrooms. Midwife-teachers whose intentions are to co-create and collaborate with students may find, like Taylor, that their student-centered intentions are countered by our efforts to keep the class focused. Even the steps that Kent-Drury suggests for refocusing the class through participation in the “global community” are coercive in the sense that they are attempts to exert control over the classroom space.

Coercion also affects the potential for sharing authority in mentoring relationships. In their analysis of a course implementing mentoring pedagogy, Haas et al. found that several of the mentor groups were being taken over by male students whose knowledge of technology far exceeded that of the female students. The male “masters” presented “technical material in a lecture/demonstration format that was too quick for most novice users. . .[and] within such collaborative efforts jumped in to ‘take over’ by presenting exact knowledge rather than accept the pauses and guesswork of their group members” (Haas et al. 239). Even though the teacher’s critical pedagogy attempted to level the playing field, microphysical power webs still exerted control in the classroom by reinscribing gendered differences in speech patterns and traditional practices of “banking education” (Haas et al. 239).

Furthermore, students were avoiding discussing problems or questions with the professor, essentially cutting her out of the loop (238). The instructor describes her feeling

of being overlooked as a resource concerning technology: “I soon began to feel that I was somehow not a part of the classroom community and that no one wanted to admit when they were having a problem, despite my availability via email, office hours, and my willingness to meet with students outside of class” (238). Female students aware of the institutional power authorizing the figure of the instructor resisted letting her know that there were problems within the mentor groups and with learning the software applications. Haas et al. attribute the women’s resistance to an effort to put forward a masculine ethos, “including assuming authority and displaying knowledge” (239). Clearly, then, midwife-teachers who encourage mentoring groups for sharing knowledge about technology will need to understand the subtle or overt ways that gender influences the exercise of power in the technology-rich classroom between students and teachers and among students and determine when and how to intervene.

Lastly, midwife-teachers need to consider the limiting effects of sharing authority with not only students but also with technology itself. As Kent Drury points out, students often come into computer classrooms before class and pursue their own agendas with technology—surfing the Web, checking e-mail, starting up IM sessions, answering cell phones, or texting friends on their phones. Teachers have developed several strategies for claiming students’ attention in order to begin class, like having students turn off their monitors and cell phones, asking them to face forward, or giving them a few minutes to wrap up their personal business. However, even with the monitors turned off teachers have to talk over the whirring of hard disks, fans, and central processing units and often find students’ attention drawn back to instant messaging, e-mail, solitaire, or the “global community” of the Web.

Midwife-teachers, embracing cyber-witch possibilities, should expect to also have times when they want to encourage students to understand how technology alters their writing and researching processes and to undermine these effects through turning away from the tech and using elemental forces. Damarin refers to the women of Greenham Common as an example of women using elemental forces to undermine technology. As part of a protest against a nuclear plant in Greeham, England, the women “turn[ed] elemental singing into sound waves of precisely the right amplitude and frequency to set swaying and ‘sing down’ the chain-link fence” (Damarin 218). Damarin’s use of the term “elemental” is slippery, and her example does not translate literally to an application in the computer composition classroom. Midwife-teachers will need to experiment and play with natural and mysterious ways of countering technology; however, since so much research and writing is now accomplished with technology and students and teachers alike are surrounded in the computer lab by visual and auditory reminders of technology, students are likely to resist any attempts to turn them away from the tech, magical or not.

Reviewing the Benefits and Drawbacks of Cyborg Pedagogy or “Dancing the Spiral Dance” through the Menagerie

By exploring the complex process of helping our hypothetical instructor work through some of the practical considerations of enacting cyborgian movement and consciousness in a technology-rich composition classroom, we gain an extended illustration of the cyborg teacher’s multiple, often competing, goals for teaching writing with technology, a depiction of the way currents of power can shift even within the seemingly closed space of the classroom, and a fledgling understanding of the many complications that

arise when we try to support feminist cyborg pedagogy with technology. Within composition, many of the issues concerning technology, like access, surveillance, harassment, and gendered differences, have already been considered; however, through the exploratory scenario, we can see how these specific complications apply to specific feminist pedagogies. While I believe the above exploration of the relationship between technology and mother, bitch, and midwife pedagogies is a good first step towards translating feminist cyborg theory into practice, there are a few drawbacks to my approach.

First, some might be tempted to view the cyborg teacher's movement through the menagerie as a progression or linear movement, since our instructor envisions a process in which the goal of one mode of opposition builds on the previous mode's work. The different modes of opposition are not linear progressions. They can be used in any order. For example, an instructor may choose to begin the semester as a midwife to give students experience with being treated equally, then move to a bitch stance to challenge students when they resist her pedagogical methods, and shift to a mothering stance when she is sure students will be able to treat everyone respectfully. Also, in the above scenario, the teacher enacts a metaphorical position for an extended time, coinciding with assignments. Shifts in teacher subjectivity could occur more or less frequently and with more or less time spent in each position. A teacher could take on several different positionalities during one class period.

What is important is that we think about when and under what conditions we would want to shift. It is tempting to think that power currents, in Sandoval's terms, do not shift as freely and as often in classrooms as they do in the culture at large. As Todd Taylor points out, power operates in the classroom whether we intend for it to or not, and teachers can never completely divest themselves of the power that the institution and their position give

them. Anyone who has experience teaching knows that students exert their wills quite frequently, through resistance and/or inattention. Therefore, to schedule shifts of teacher subjectivity periodically in the semester may not be realistic. Teachers may find that, though they may anticipate how the course is likely to progress, enacting the cyborgian differential may be a craft that requires teachers to be more flexible and responsive to situations in the actual classroom. Even if the above scenario may be unrealistic in the frequency, duration, and schedule of shifts, it still is a useful exercise because it highlights some possibilities for transforming old feminist metaphors, some potential conditions for shifting, and various complications with technology.

A second likely problem with my depiction of moving through the menagerie arises due to overlaps in both the feminist stances themselves and complications with technology. Obviously, there is some overlap between the midwife metaphor and the mother and bitch metaphors. Though I present the mother and bitch metaphors as distinctly different, like postmodern mothering pedagogy, hook's engaged pedagogy is "confrontational, honest, direct, and loving—always, always, loving" (Greenbaum 153). Hooks draws heavily on Freire's critical pedagogy, so she likely shares authority with her students more than my portrayal would indicate.²⁸ Also, some of the same problems with technology affect all three modes, but I have tended to talk about a technological complication as if it relates to only one of the stances. My justification for this is that I think some issues affect some approaches more than others. For example, surveillance affects all of the stances. Bitch pedagogues may be just as concerned as mother-teachers about administrators reading e-mail or electronic discussions where they are directly confronting students. Midwife pedagogues could share the same concerns as mothers and bitches if they use technology to nurture or

confront. Across the stances, teachers in the computer classroom would want to be aware of the ways that technology changes the writing process, but in the midwife stance this is of particular concern. Any attempt to tell a story involves choosing what to focus on and what to leave out. In this case, the overlap among the stances and their relationships with technology are omissions to some extent, but they should not detract from the usefulness of the narrative.

Lastly, a third potential drawback of my portrayal of moving differentially through the menagerie lies in my choosing the mother, bitch, and midwife figures as the metaphors for the feminist teacher's subjectivity. Some feminists may find that the use of metaphors is problematic for describing feminist approaches and prefer metonymy (Brady; Ritchie and Boardman). Susan Jarratt in her review of feminist pedagogies in composition wanted to avoid labeling feminist approaches and grouped her review around a series of questions that feminist pedagogies typically address. The use of metaphors itself is risky, but in addition, by singling out three metaphors, I create a sort of typology of my own that works like Kenneth Burke's terministic screens, masking some commonalities and, of course, leaving out many other possible feminist pedagogical positions. My typology of mother, bitch, and midwife presents a version of feminist possibilities where the differences among the stances revolve around how to deal with conflict and authority in the classroom. Provide safe spaces, encourage conflict, or use some combination of nurturing and challenging are the three positions on the continuum. Or, in a different perspective, the continuum is between mothering, refusing to mother, and some combination therein. Many feminist scholars would be bothered by the feminine stereotypes of my metaphors. There are many other possible additions to the menagerie. For example, Damarin suggests the "alone standing woman" and

the “laughing mother” as other possible feminist standpoints to occupy the space of the third term in the “spiral dance.” Diane Davis’ laughing pedagogue and Jacqueline Rhodes’ or Michelle Comstock’s netgrrl/riotgrrl might also be good additions. We can have an endless number of tropes for feminist pedagogy, and any attempt to explore several in depth will leave some out. Another danger with typologies is the tendency to hierarchize the terms, though I believe I have avoided this danger. The potential drawbacks of using metaphors in a kind of typology do not outweigh the benefits we gain from exploring in depth these three metaphors as only partial answers to the feminist search for a viable stance for teachers. What is important is that we refuse to fixate on one metaphor, metonymic concept, or particular subject position because doing so can harm teachers and students and leave us with no alternatives for minimizing harm.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The problem of understanding and theorizing a feminist subject position from which to speak and teach in the context of the computer composition classroom is complex and multi-faceted. Yet, as my discussion shows, there is much at stake in forming partial, provisional answers to this problem. Our constructions of ourselves can influence who speaks in the classroom, whose voices are authorized by the class, and what is said or left unsaid. By considering technology as part of the subjectivity of the teacher, by being cyborg, we ensure that we participate in constructing the relationships between ourselves and our technologies and refuse to allow machines invisible power over our choices, behaviors, and knowledge.

The answer that I develop throughout this discussion reflects the complexity of figuring a feminist pedagogy for the technology-rich composition classroom. My review of the ways cyborg theory has entered the literature in composition and rhetoric informs my construction of feminist cyborg pedagogy in several ways. Research suggests that cyborg subjectivity can help teachers and researchers position themselves as activist-critics, who are committed to using technology in the service of radical democracy and acknowledge the ways technology is both liberating and oppressive. Also, research suggests that conceptualizing the subjectivity of the rhetor as cyborg creates a vision of rhetoric that accounts for multiple, partial, contradictory constructed selves that can be continually assembled and disassembled in response to and resistance of the particular situation and time. In Chapter IV, I take these suggestions of cyborg subjectivity for the feminist instructor one step further by theorizing and describing what being cyborg might look like in a teacher's

actual practice. Theoretical research on CMC and hypertext suggests that these computer technologies can help students play with cyborg subjectivity and gain a better understanding of themselves as reader/writer, colonizer/colonized, and self/Other. However, other research that studies the ways students and teachers use CMC and hypertext questions whether people really play with their constructions of themselves online. In Chapter IV, I use research from both the theory and practice camps to help describe whether technology empowers or limits mother, bitch, and midwife pedagogues. Finally, research connecting theory and practice as cyborg pedagogy offers specific examples of assignments for students, highlights the difficulty of translating theory into practice, and exposes several risks involved in the process. In my own version of cyborg pedagogy, I avoid proposing specific assignments and, instead, provide a broader description of the process of translating cyborg theory into feminist pedagogy and a more detailed account of what cyborg pedagogy looks like in the classroom.

In order to avoid several limitations of previous research, I rearticulate cyborg theory through Sandoval's differential consciousness and methodology of the oppressed. The characteristics of trickster/differential movement and cyborg /differential consciousness, then, provide the framework for my situated vision of moving differentially through a feminist menagerie of pedagogical metaphors in the technology-rich environment. From my scenario, we gain an understanding of the many objectives cyborg teachers must balance and the situations and times when teachers may want to shift tactics and subject positions. We also gain insight into how cultural narratives of women and technology shape the instructor's experience of the classroom and how those narratives can be transformed into empowering

myths. Perhaps most importantly, we gain an understanding of the dangers of committing to only one feminist tactic in the classroom.

My response to the problem of finding a feminist subject position for instructors in the computer composition classroom is but one possible answer to the problem. Other scholars interested in feminist pedagogy could contribute to adding other figures to the feminist menagerie that I have sparsely populated. We already have a rich array of feminist scholarship to pull from. For example, such research may take up Dianne Davis' laughing pedagogue" and Michelle Comstock's netgrrl/riotgrrl/geekgirl and do the critical work of reading, decoding, and transforming these metaphors. Future researchers may also want to take a different approach to studying feminist cyborg pedagogy, like focusing more on the teacher's raced, sexed, classed "body as text" and/or the students' gaze. Specifically, some feminists might prefer a research methodology that privileges personal experience over abstract theory. Such scholars could collect feminists' personal accounts of their experiences enacting their provisional, tactical, shifting pedagogies in technology-rich settings.

My research also has implications for future research that is not directly related to pedagogy. For example, more research on cultural narratives about mothers, bitches, and midwives and their relationships to technology is needed to help us better understand how technology impacts women in our culture, our academic institutions, and our academic discipline. Also, I believe we need a better understanding of the actual benefits and limitations of online communities. Such research would improve our knowledge about the factors influencing community involvement, the benefits to actual participants, and the effects of the online community's collective actions. Another step in my argument that other scholars can take up is the project of reviewing how cyborg theory is used in composition

studies. I did not include post-human discussions of cyborg theory, because to date, post-human cyborg research in composition studies has not addressed gender issues. We as a field will benefit from hearing multiple perspectives on how to characterize the uses and benefits of cyborg theory.

While my project explores many areas that future researchers may wish to consider, my proposal for cyborg pedagogy, like Winkelmann and Inman's, poses potential risks that we need to understand before "dancing the spiral dance" through the menagerie. One risk is that, in order for differential movement to be effective, I think teachers would need to explain that they practice a feminist pedagogy. Such disclosure may be risky because several scholars share their experiences of anti-feminist backlash when they tell their students about their feminist political goals. Another risk may be that, in actually creating assignments to fit their cyborg pedagogy, instructors may not meet institutional and departmental requirements. For example, asking students to write personal essays about their experiences negotiating the many borders of their socially constructed selves may not work well in composition departments that model their classrooms on writing across the curriculum.

In addition, when female instructors take on the roles of bitch or midwife in the classroom, their behavior in the classroom is not likely to conform to student's expectations of how women and teachers should act, and as Greenbaum points out, students may evaluate instructors poorly based on the teacher's refusal to take on the role of mother in the classroom. Thus, "feminist compositionists are placed in a precarious economic situation, since poor evaluations will naturally affect the advancement of their careers" (Greenbaum 159). Relatedly, many students (and probably teachers) are accustomed to thinking about the teacher as having a stable identity or subject position, and embodying multiple, partial,

contradictory subject positions may go against student's expectations for instructors. If we do not explain our methods to our students, such shifts in identity may prove so confusing to students that it interrupts instruction.

With these risks in mind, on the next balmy late-August day as I make my way toward a new set of composition classes, I suspect that I will still be acutely aware of how "who I am" will affect my classroom. As part of including feminism in my pedagogy and of taking responsibility for the boundaries between myself and technology, I hope to be prepared to enact cyborg subjectivity as effective subject positions from which to teach writing. As a Southern, white, middle-class, female, feminist, cyborg instructor, I would have to be careful not to graft Sandoval and Haraway's egalitarian theories onto a white feminist's dream for common ground. In other words, I will need to be vigilant about not privileging gender oppressions over oppressions relating to race, sexuality, and class. As a new lecturer, I will not have the kind of teaching experience and job security that would make taking risks in the classroom easier. However, since I believe feminist interventions in technology and pedagogy are important and am committed to teaching with technology, being cyborg will be well worth the risks.

NOTES

¹ For an extended discussion of the history of computers in composition from 1979-1994 see, Hawisher et al., *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History*.

² Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe take up the term again in 1996 in “Writing as Democratic Social Action in a Technological World: Politicizing and Inhabiting Virtual Landscapes.”

³ Haynes’ text deliberately tries to resist being codified. She describes her own subjectivity as “amphibious a/positions” and her role as “a weaver of morphisms.” The excess that she participates in and supports is more aligned with Cixous’ “Laugh of the Medusa” than Haraway’s cyborg.

⁴ See Susan Romano, “The Egalitarianism Narrative: Whose Story? Which Yardstick.”

⁵ Haraway and Sandoval influenced each other’s work, and both frequently reference each other’s work. For example, in the “Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway references Sandoval’s work on “women of color” as a “hopeful model of political identity called ‘oppositional consciousness’” and sees “women of color” as having a cyborg identity (155, 174). Haraway was drawing from one of Sandoval’s early publications as a graduate student. Sandoval and Haraway were both working with a growing contingent U.S. third-world feminists grappling with how to responsibly account for differences among women and how to improve feminism’s effectiveness in postmodern times. Haraway cites their experiences together on

the History of Consciousness Board of UCSC as influential to her manifesto (243 n1). My goal here is not to concretely establish the influences the two theorists had on each other but to support my choice of Sandoval as a useful theorist to help interpret Haraway's work.

⁶ Sandoval pays particular attention to Jameson's work in order to set up her argument that the new power relations that he despairs over, in fact, are the very ground where true opposition can occur. Sandoval treats many other theorists at great length and in depth. Ruby Tapia in a review of Sandoval's book sees her extensive reading and analysis of other theorists as a way to use their theories in ways that "don't simply support her own, but that rather co-construct another 'third' and still (always) moving position of theoretical and social resistance, reflects the sort of oppositional activism that other scholars have deciphered in the projects of other numerous political coalitions" (740). Jameson is the only theorist that I take up with any detail because she uses his work to set up the problem of oppositional subjectivity in our time.

⁷ Sandoval reworks traditional hegemonic feminism's typology of oppositional social forms, liberal, cultural/radical, Marxist, and socialist, and sees them as forms of social movement that can be employed by any oppressed group. In this move, she renames the forms as equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatist. Sandoval relates her topography to traditional feminist typologies and defines the four modes of opposition in the following ways:

- Equal rights Form—Practitioners argue that the oppressed group does not differ from legitimated or privileged people and deserve to be treated equally (56).
(liberal feminism)

- Revolutionary Form—Practitioners aim to radically change the power system that establishes oppressions based on differences (56). (Marxist and socialist feminisms)
- Supremacist Form—Practitioners celebrate the differences that constitute their oppressions and claim superiority for their group over the dominant group (57). (cultural and radical feminism)
- Separatist Form—Practitioners seek to “protect and nurture the differences that define its practioners through their complete separation from the dominant social order” (57).

Sandoval also adds a fifth form of social movement practiced by US third world feminists, differential social movement.

⁸ Sandoval uses the analogy of a clutch to describe differential social movement and consciousness. She writes, “In this sense, the differential mode of consciousness functions like the clutch of an automobile, the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power” (*Methodology* 58).

⁹ According to Sandoval, Haraway does throughout the whole breath of her critical work develop her own explicit terminology for individual skills of oppositional consciousness. Most of these are not present in “The Cyborg Manifesto.” For Sandoval’s detailed analysis of the commonalities between Haraway and Sandoval’s terminology and methodology see “New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed.”

¹⁰ A brief overview of these terms may be helpful. First-level signification is the basic level of making meaning through language. A Signifier (Sr), any material form that

can hold meaning, and a Signified (Sd), any concept that can be tied to a signifier, together create the Sign, the relationship between the Sr and Sd (Sandoval *Methodology* 92-93). Second-level signification, mythology or ideology, involves turning the first-level Sign into a new Sr and filling this Sr with a new Sd to create a new Sign or signification (Sandoval *Methodology* 94-95). Advertisements often use second-level signification to sell products. For example, the milk industry often has pictures of healthy, athletic people in their “Got Milk” ads. The first-level signification is Sr, the picture, and Sd, the concepts of health, beauty, athletic ability, which together form the Sign. The myth or ideology that is produced is when this Sign gets connected to the act of drinking milk.

¹¹ Such criticism was pointed out earlier in the literature review. See Chatput and Knadler.

¹² A thorough or even partial history of feminism in the field is beyond the scope of this project. My point is to suggest that, as feminist theories evolved in conversation and debate (often heated), so too did the metaphors informing the teacher’s role in the classroom. For a history of feminism in composition, see Ritchie and Boardman’s “Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption.” Also, for an overview of feminist pedagogies in composition see Jarratt’s “Feminist Pedagogy” contribution to *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*.

¹³ I chose not to address the netgrrl/geekgrrl/riotgrrl metaphor because they are not really deeply seated in a feminist theory of pedagogy like the mother, midwife, and bitch pedagogues; however, I do see this as a potentially powerful position for feminists to work from, especially if feminist teachers involve themselves in feminist eZines online or off,

bring those experiences of “radical textual subjectivity” into their teaching, and involve their students in similar publications that merge personal and political discourse. See Michelle Comstock’s “Grrl Zine Networks: Re-Composing Spaces of Authority, Gender, and Culture” and Jacqueline Rhodes’ “‘Substantive and Feminist Girlie Action’: Women Online.”

¹⁴ See Susan Jarratt’s “Feminist Pedagogy.”

¹⁵ In fact, hooks discusses the role of television in the 1950s in creating and maintaining the vision of motherhood that set the standard for women of color and white women: “Like their white counterparts, black mothers of the fifties were trying to realize as much of the American dream as they could. The message they received was that it was their role as women to create a harmonious nuclear family. Television shows like *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet*, and *Father Knows Best* set the standard for what this families should be like. Our mothers watched these shows and so did we. There was no screaming, yelling, fights about money in these television families. Everything was in its place and everybody had a place. Often we measured our black families by these shows and found them wanting” (34).

¹⁶ See Marsha F. Cassidy’s analysis of post-feminist rhetoric in 1980s and early 1990s computer advertisements in “Cyberspace Meets Domestic Space: Personal Computers, Women’s Work, and the Gendered Territories of the Family Home.”

¹⁷ Bee Lavender, in “Castles in the Ether: Money, Power, and the Rise and Fall of Women’s Web Networks,” explains how marketers and advertisers wanted to take advantage of the communities that women’s web sites were creating and many site owners needed capital to help with the time-consuming work of maintaining busy websites. Business

practices of the large companies and the advertisements often ran counter to the political beliefs of the site's community and many stopped participating. Many sites that refused advertising or network capital could not keep up with the demands of community participants.

¹⁸ See Claudia Springer's "The Pleasure of the Interface," Mary Ann Doane's "Technophilia: Technology, Representation, and the Feminine" and Elizabeth Fulton's "On the Eve of Destruction: Technology, Nostalgia, and the Fetishized Maternal Body."

¹⁹ I want to make it clear that engaged pedagogy is not entirely teacher-centered. Freire's student-centered critical pedagogy is a source of inspiration for hooks, but she does theorize and practice a pedagogy that requires significant authority to remain centered in the figure of the teacher.

²⁰ The three main tenets of "maternal thinking" are: "to preserve the student's fragile newborn thoughts"; "to foster the child's growth" through urging the student to trust in their own knowledge by expressing their burgeoning ideas and, then, confirming those ideas; and "[to] shape natural growth in such a way that her child becomes the sort of adult that she can appreciate and others can accept" (Belenky et al., 218-220).

²¹ See "Technology in Birth: First Do No Harm" by Marsden Wagner, MD.

²² Clearly, this is an oversimplification of the factors involved in the association of midwives with witchcraft. For more thorough discussions of the class, gender, political, and religious involved see Anne Llewellyn Barstow's Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts and Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution.

²³ In a NCTE conference paper entitled, “(In)Visible Step Sisters: Stories of Women Teaching Composition,” by Jane E. Hindman et al., Hindman indicates that she likes the midwife metaphor for its association with magic, empowerment, and nature. Tess Cosslett discusses the relationship of between midwives and magic in “The Aseptic Male Obstetrician and the Filthy Peasant Crone: Contemporary Women Writers’ Accounts of Birth.”

²⁴ Damarin relates the goddess to mothering pedagogies, and she envisions cyborg teachers as teachers who use technology networks to resist “the naturalizing of machines and the mechanization of culture” (216).

²⁵ Damarin supports the combination of witch/crone/hag by relating it to similar moves by radical feminists in the last twenty years; “Under the name of W.I.T.C.H., a *Wild Independent Thinking Crone and Hag*, we might imagine these much maligned women as teachers” (217).

²⁶ See the Imperial War Museum’s “Greenham Common: The Women’s Peace Camp 1981-2000” online exhibit.

²⁷ It is beyond the scope of this project to touch on all of the invisible elements of each CMC technology. For example, critically analyzing hypertext is the subject of much research in computers and composition. For a sampling of this research, see James Sosnoski’s “Hyper-Readers and Their Reading Engines,” MaryLynn Saul’s “Limitations of Hypertext in the Composition Classroom,” Kathleen Duguay’s “Sites of Conflict: The Challenges of Hypertextualizing Composition in the College Writing Class,” Nicholas C. Burbules “Rhetorics of the Web: Hyperreading and Critical Literacy, ” and Alan Rea and Doug White’s “The Changing Nature of Writing: Prose or Code in the Classroom..”

²⁸ Jarratt in “Feminist Pedagogy” places hooks as one of the “feminist scholars [who] clearly recommend that women teachers adopt positions of power in their classrooms” (119).

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