AUTHENTICITY DISCOURSE AND THE "TRAUMATIC EVENT OF

MATERIALITY": ADAPTING COMPOSITION THEORY TO

THE NEW DIVIDUAL SELF

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Tom Hruska—thank you for teaching me to value the "little moments" in life. I
will leave a light on for you.

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines the discourse of authenticity over time through the lens of

philosophy, literature, and composition theory. My purpose is to define what it means to

be "authentic" in different eras and how definitions of authenticity changed (or failed to

change) with current societal issues. Once authenticity is defined, I seek to explain why,

in today's 21st century digitized ecosystem, many of us still try to obtain the romantic

notion of an authentic self when that self is no longer a plausible goal. This research also

seeks to understand what it means to be authentic today if we can no longer obtain a prior

concept of authenticity.

The analysis of various philosophical, literary, and rhetorical works suggested that

our current psyches are traumatized by what Tom McCarthy calls a "traumatic event of

materiality." Our relationship with digital devices shocks us ontologically because we

give these devices ontological value and because these devices blur traditional concepts

of space and time to the extent that neither exists as they once did. Since we strive for

what Andrew Potter calls an "authenticity hoax," our inability to achieve what we believe

as an authentic existence due to the trauma of digital materialism is a shock to our

system. This shock forces us to split our identities into various facets in numerous social

network sites in an attempt to survive the trauma inflicted on us by our relationship to digital devices, my theory of the new authentic self.

It's important, then, to redefine what it means to be authentic to avoid any further trauma and to learn to accept and adapt to the fact that we are no longer individuals but dividuals, at once many-sided and genuine. After redefining a new authentic self, we can apply this theory to the composition classroom, a space that has always relied heavily on the concept of the self, and adapt composition theory to this new authentic self.

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CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHING AN AUTHENTICITY DISCOURSE

"…the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology." –Marshall McLuhan *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*

In a recent *New York Times* article entitled "Who Are You on Facebook Now?" author Aimee Lee Ball reports on the popular social network's decision to change user gender choices from the traditional two (male and female) to fifty. This was an important moment in identity studies because users are now allowed (and even encouraged) to break free from the traditional binary concept of identity on a public forum. I think it's interesting that the author includes the word "now" in her title, hinting that the concept of identity is fluid and constantly changing, especially in a digital forum, and who you are one moment is not necessarily who you are in another moment. If this is true, then what does this move by Facebook say about the status of authentic identity today? Can we be multi-sided and fluid and still be considered "authentic"? Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is to first track the discourse of authenticity over time and how, in a digital age, the concept of authenticity is more complicated than ever.

In today's digitized ecosystem, the idea of authenticity is perhaps more complicated than ever as we struggle with the philosophical implications of whether or not what we post online is truly a representation of our "true" selves or simply an example of our ideal version of self, the self we wish we were outside of the cyber landscape. Because we hold onto an older version of authenticity established centuries ago, we also hold ourselves back from letting go and truly exploring what it means to be authentic *today* as opposed to *yesterday*. Imagine what we could be free to be if we changed the definition of what it means to be authentic today.

In the past, authenticity was at once a search for inner truth, while also an analysis of outer (false) influences on our identity as the world of appearances "is not the original condition of man [but] merely the spirit of society, and the inequality which society engenders, that thus change and transform all our natural inclinations" (Rousseau *Discourse on Inequality* 113). Our need to survive in society (and our firm belief in a world made up of dualisms) created a social "mask" while, simultaneously, creating its "other"—our authentic identity. The terms "self" and "identity" are usually not interchangeable. According to Finkenauer et. al, "a person has one self and may have different identities that can (but do not have to) vary across situations and contexts" (28). Yet, in today's digitalized world, authentic identity takes a dramatic turn. The dichotomy of inner and outer, belief and truth is shaken by the idea that there are many ways to exist in a technological world. As Bruno Latour notes, "'To be or not to be' is no longer the question!" (*An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* 178). While "dualism has its charms," it

also has its limits, forcing us to see the world in a restricted way that digital technologies today refuse to entertain (Latour 146).

In a way, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" sets up this dichotomy between what is "real" and what is "false" that echoes (or should I say haunts?) authenticity discourse. Those tied to chains watching shadows flicker on the walls enjoy a "false" shadowy-show, living the ignorant life, until a philosopher comes to free one of them to lead them out of the cave and into the "truth" associated with the light of the sun. Though the ascent is a hard and violent journey, that person is better in the long run because now he is not living a "false" life—he sees the "truth." But whose truth, exactly, does he see? Surely not his own as, for most of his life, he has known another truth. This new "truth" is that of the philosopher's—a subjective truth that is given primacy by us, setting up a dichotomy between "truth" and "authenticity" as opposed to the "fake" and the "inauthentic." Luce Irigaray explains this dichotomy well: "either let Truth carry the day against deceitful appearances, or else, claiming once more to reverse optics, let us give exclusive privilege to the fake, the mask, the fantasy because, at least at times, they mark the nostalgia we feel for something even more true" (*Speculum* 269). Therefore, "nothing, including man, therefore, can rejoice in its own image since 'own-ness' is dictated, commanded, monopolized by Truth" (291).

When a person leaves the cave through one way, she limits her ability to leave by another way—creating a forced dichotomy: "For the passages through which he might have been introduced or inserted have been eliminated, obliterated, stopped up, in order

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to ensure the domination of the Truth" (Irigaray 281). This action creates a false model of outer/inner, truth/lie that we adhere to today when we think of the romantic notions of authenticity (282). It seems as if today, this new authentic self (selves) can finally destroy this dichotomy that was subjective from the very beginning. Let us redefine what it means to be "authentic" and "true," instead of relying on outdated perceptions of authenticity created by "experts" to guide our beliefs.

No longer is there the concept of an inner core of truth and an outer materialism of mere belief but rather, as Tom McCarthy points out, we have a kernel of inauthenticity within us as the result of our relationship with electronic devices. Rather than see this change as a negative thing (as some traditional romanticists and staunch modernists tend to feel), I propose that we look at our new technologically-based, materialistic selves as the new authentic self—authenticity today means to have suffered from what McCarthy calls "traumatic event of materiality," resulting in a "dividual" self with no *one* inner core of truth but *many* ("Joint Statement" 233).

I associate this definition of materiality to include digital technology, so to call our relationship with digital technology a "trauma" is an interesting yet complicated notion. The word "trauma" calls to mind violence and death with lifelong repercussions on the human psyche or body. According to the American Psychological Association, trauma is "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident…or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms

like headaches or nausea" ("Trauma"). When the latest technology comes out, there is a sense of "shock" from this new device and what it means for our own lives. We want to believe that we can do without our smartphones, our social networks, our Instagrams—that our lives are not completely rooted in these things. But the desire to get the latest technology, the latest updates, and the hundreds of people we see walking down the street with their eyes on their mobile devices tells us that perhaps our relationship with digital technology has power over us. (Ironically, our inability to look away from our devices for too long leads not only to an emotional trauma but can also cause physical trauma, such as texting while driving). Our long-term relationships with digital technology also involve long-term reactions of trauma, like "strained relationships" with others outside of the digital realm while looking too long at a digital device can spark headaches.

While philosophy, psychology, culture, and literature changed with each shift of this discourse of authenticity, composition theory tends to stay on the outskirts, clinging to either Expressivism or social-construction theories, not adapting to this new authentic self as strongly as these other disciplines have done. To stay relevant in today's digitized world, composition theory must acknowledge that an authenticity discourse does exist and that we need to join that conversation.

What is Authenticity?

What makes authenticity tricky to define is its allusiveness. Some scholars, like Jacob Golomb, feel that "the notion of authenticity…signifies something beyond the domain of objective language" and that authenticity's "presence is discerned in its absence, in the passionate search for it, in inauthenticity and in various acts of 'bad faith'" (7). Others question the validity of a concept that "is a construct—a postulated standard of truth that we can at best approximate and that at worst turns out to be a mere chimera" (Mueller 28). Yet, for the purposes of this research, I am going to attempt to define authenticity as it once was in order to explain how a new concept of authenticity needs to be embraced today. The concept of an authentic self is, according to Charles Guignon, "an ideal of owning oneself, of achieving self-possession" that ultimately allows the self to "achieve self-realization and self-fulfillment" (6-7). To be authentic is to be connected with the "real me," thus fulfilling and answering that ubiquitous calling of the meaning of life. It is an ideal we strive for as we associate authentic existence as truly living—living a life that coincides with *our* values and not those of others—as providing meaning to a complicated and confusing life.

Over time, authenticity discourse has fluctuated between either an unsteady but necessary relationship between the inner and outer world or a complete dismissal of that outer/materialistic world and looking deep within oneself to achieve authentic existence. But now, in spite of many postmodernist attempts to reaffirm an inner core of truth, many

writers of authenticity, like Andrew Potter and Thomas McCarthy, reject this notion in favor of a new self that is completely materialistic at its core.

One form of this materialism is digital in nature, created due to our intense relationship with digital technologies from an early age, reprogramming our brains in ways that scientists today are still studying. According to Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together*, the inundation of digital technology (and our relations with this technology) alters our relationships with each other and with the outside/natural world to the point that we see these non-digital/technological relationships as primarily secondary. Turkle asserts that "these days, insecure in our relationships and anxious about intimacy, we look to technology for ways to be in relationships and protect ourselves from them at the same time" (*Alone Together* xii). This new digitized self is what I argue is the new authentic self, cultivated and ultimately traced back to the classical period with Plato's Socrates.

To "know thyself" was a Delphic maxim Plato's Socrates discusses in several dialogues and is at the root of Plato's philosophy of the self. In *Charmides*, Socrates says, "for self-knowledge would certainly be maintained by me to be the very essence of knowledge, and in this I agree with him who dedicated the inscription, 'Know thyself!' at Delphi." Plato's Socrates also discusses this concept in *Phaedrus* when he says, "I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant things" (229e-230a). Before Socrates can know anything, then, he must know himself first—reiterating the point made

in *Charmides* that self-knowledge is the source of all knowledge. Since Plato valued a

system where each individual had a role to follow, many scholars see the maxim "know

thyself" as meaning "to know above all what your *place* is in the scheme of things—what

you are and what you should be as that has been laid out in advance by the cosmic order"

(Guignon 13). The good of the city is a primary focus in Plato's works, so to know one's

place in the city will keep the city strong. If self-knowledge is "the very essence of

knowledge," then it is of extreme importance that the knowledge found within the self is

true—is authentic—or the entire system of knowledge comes into question, ultimately

threatening society and the rules/morals that hold society together.

This belief in self-knowledge as the root of all knowledge echoes throughout

history, making it difficult for future philosophers to ignore such a strong and valid

argument regarding knowledge. This focus shifted slightly with St. Augustine, who

believed that to know yourself is to look within and towards God. Man is fallen from

grace and the only path to truth—to authenticity—is through the Truth incarnate. In *On

Christian Doctrine*, Augustine writes:

> For he is the best man who turns his whole life toward the immutable life and
>
> adheres to it with all his affection…thus, all your thoughts and all your life and all
>
> your understanding should be turned toward Him whom you receive these
>
> powers…He did not leave any part of life which should be free and find itself
>
> room to desire the enjoyment of something else (19).

Augustine believes that "our proper orientation in life is to be God-directed, and so we are only properly and fully human when we are bound to God" (Guignon 15). The importance of finding God explains why so many rhetorical doctrines during this time focused on the best and proper preaching practices in order to help others on their journey towards God and an authentic life. Some immediate examples that come to mind include Guibert de Nogent's "A Book about the Way a Sermon Ought to be Given" and "De Arte Praedicandi" by (Pseudo) Thomas Aquinas. Augustine even went so far as to say "self-love is better called hate," further pulling the idea of an authentic life away from a complete immersion of the inner life of the self (*On Christian Doctrine* 20).

As scientific thought progressed during the Renaissance and into the Enlightenment, the stranglehold Christianity had on the concept of an authentic self shifted once again. With the focus on science as the ultimate truth, "the self [came] to be seen as a *subject*, a center of experience and action, set over against a world of objects that are to be known and manipulated" (Guignon 32). The self was also seen as powerful and above nature, and because of this power people "can remake themselves as they wish" (33). Since this focus on science and anthrocentric thinking ultimately made the self indistinguishable from others, there was a greater desire to conserve a unique inner self that could not be touched by a manipulative world. Michel de Montaigne favors this rejection of the outside world. In "On Solitude" he writes:

We have lived quite enough for others: let us live at least this tail-end of life for ourselves. Let us bring our thoughts and reflections back to ourselves and to our

own well-being…let us disentangle ourselves from those violent traps which pledge us to other things and which distance us from ourselves. (9)

The desire to "disentangle ourselves" from the world and society led to the mind/body split between an inner, authentic self and an outer mask, a move which frightened many and resulted in a break from romanticism during the Enlightenment as authenticity came not from a mixture of inner and outer forces but instead from a complete rejection of the outside world.

Romanticism, according to Charles Guignon, consists of three key features in relation to authenticity: "the attempt to recover a sense of oneness and wholeness that appears to have been lost," "the conviction that real 'truth' is discovered not by rational reflection and scientific method, but by total immersion in one's own deepest and most intense feelings," and "[the] discovery…that the self is the highest and most all-encompassing of all that is found in reality" (51). The first feature of recovery indicates that there is a loss associated with an inauthentic existence, inferring that authenticity is out there—we just need to find it again. This feature can be seen in a lot of authenticity literature, particularly Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, which I will explain in depth in Chapter Three.

The second feature of authenticity tied to the Romantic period is deeply linked with Jean Jacques Rosseau. Rousseau felt that we should not hide who we are internally, "even if this meant flying in the face of the moral standards of society" (Lindholm 8).

Where Descartes believes inward *thinking* made a person an authentic being, Rousseau advocates a different point of view:

> To live is not to breathe; it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence. The man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years but he who has most felt life (*Emile* 42).

For Rousseau, "civilization has robbed the human race of independence and deformed its true nature…Not only are we enchained; we have even grown to love our chains, and to embrace the invidious social world that has destroyed our genuine being" (Lindholm 9). Rousseau also sees the value in primitive societies who, due to their close connection with nature, were more authentic than those of us who live in more modern civilizations (9). Because of this distinction between primitive and social lives, "the modern outlook brings to realization a split between the *Real Me*—the true inner self—and the *persona* (from the Greek word for "mask") that one puts on for the external world" (Guignon 35).

What's interesting about Rousseau is that "self-discovery is not a matter of *finding* an entity that has been there all along" but rather "a matter of *making* the self the course of the search" (Guignon 69). The concept of "making the self" is tied to Stephen Greenblatt's "self-fashioning," something prominent throughout time but especially so during the Renaissance when Christianity lost its foothold on the human psyche. As the power of Christianity faded during the Renaissance, people were released from the

pressure to be Christ-like, a separation that opened up the possibilities of self-fashioning to include "the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment" (Greenblatt 4). But self-fashioning is more than just a response to a loss of religion. For Greenblatt, "self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss" (9). Thus, with any creative act of self-fashioning one gains a created identity while, at the same time, losing a part of his or herself by denying another part.

The third feature of romantic authenticity tends to ignore the influences of the outside world, making one feel that "to be authentic is already to be asocial" (Guignon 76). In an attempt to limit the amount of loss of an original self through self-fashioning, a person oftentimes tries to limit the exposure to outside influences.

George Campbell, unlike Rousseau, sees logic in the human experience rather than looking primarily at human emotions. He accomplishes this ability to see logic through experience by adhering towards Bacon's faculties of the mind (memory, reason, imagination, and will) and creating a new rhetorical treatise that speaks to each of these faculties. In his work *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell's main goal is to help speakers "enlighten" their listeners by appealing to all of the faculties of the mind—*appearing* authentic by following a logical formula created by Bacon. What's interesting to note

here is that Campbell sees the importance of appealing to sensory faculties, showing that

he understands the importance of the outer world on the human psyche. It is hard to deny

the influence of our senses on our psyche, complicating the idea that a true, authentic self

is completely cut off from the outer world.

During the Victorian period, English novelists created characters that were

authentic precisely because these characters adhered to their selected social class. These

writers saw class as "a chief condition of personal authenticity" in an effort to keep class

structures in place (Trilling 115). Some examples of authors who adhere to this idea are

Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte. At the turn of the 19th century, the authenticity of

these characters is questioned by Thomas Hardy in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude serves as a

vessel for Hardy to critique the pattern of Victorian novelists authenticating characters

based upon social status. Throughout the novel Jude tries to break free from his social

status, only to be harshly denied over and over again by the rigid class and religious

systems of his time. Ultimately, he loses everything and everyone he loves, dying a

lonely and empty man. However, these examples to the contrary do not stop the sway of

society over our beliefs of authenticity that continues in the early modernist period as

class structures were replaced by the mechanical structures associated with Industrialism.

Modernism and Hiding Within

During the early part of Modernism, the chaos of uncertainty as a result of industrial revolutions, scientific discoveries, and the horrors of WWI led to the birth of several manifestos that offered readers a solid belief system to grasp onto during a transitional and shaky time. Ultimately, many of the manifestos wanted to find a solid definition of the self as the human individual was pushed aside in response to globalization and the dehumanization of war. Some of these manifestos celebrated the age of the machine as the future of authenticity, particularly Marinetti and his work "The Futurist Manifesto" (1908). This manifesto proclaims that "the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed" and that museums were filled with memories of death. To look to the past for authentic existence is to look in the wrong direction—backwards. Thus, "Marinetti…imputes to the organic as a social and moral ideal exactly the quality of inauthenticity against which the organic principle had itself been directed; not the organic but the mechanical is to be the authenticating principle of modern life" (Trilling 129). In other words, Marinetti advocates for a materialistic authentic self quite similar to the one Tom McCarthy heralds. Other writers during this time, however, turned within to help preserve the true self through a complete rejection of the outside world and a re-embracing of romantic individuality. As Daniel Lea points out, "the Romantic self must, in order to achieve authentic self-understanding and freedom from the imposition of external codes of conduct, reject its duty to others, thereby becoming paradoxically self-alienated" (462).

When we reject our "duty to others," we choose a selfish (but necessary) course towards authenticity. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his earlier writings, agreed that authenticity is a primarily selfish act. To find authenticity, one must have a "stoical attitude" that "rests on a divorce between consciousness and the world" (Lea 974). In *The War Diaries: November 1939-1940*, Sartre writes, "I rather think I was authentic before my leave. Probably because I was alone. In Paris, I was not authentic. At present, I'm no longer anything" (219). He also ties authenticity in this early writing to the act of feeling, reminiscent of Rousseau's theory of authentic existence:

> It's true, I'm not authentic. With everything that I feel, before actually feeling it I know that I'm feeling it. And then, bound up as I am with defining and thinking it, I no longer more than half-feel it. My greatest passions are mere nervous impulses. The rest of the time I feel hurriedly, then elaborate in words, press a little here, force a little there, and lo and behold an exemplary feeling has been constructed, good enough to be put into a bound volume. All that men feel, I can guess at, explain, put down in black and white. But not feel. I fool people: I look like a sensitive person but I'm barren. (61-2)

This "barren" feeling is due to a loss of inner contemplation that would ultimately lead to finding that inner authenticity where true individual feelings take root.

One way towards inner contemplation is through the act of writing. Virginia Woolf attempts to capture this inner search for authenticity in her own writings while

encouraging other writers of her time to follow her lead. Woolf encourages us to "look within" for authenticity, believing that is "the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit" ("Modern Fiction") Authors who do this:

> …attempt to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist. Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. ("Modern Fiction" 161)

Yet, the task of recording everything one thinks and feels within to reach an authentic core is far more complicated than it seems. With Freud's unconscious to deal with, to be authentic meant to first overcome the unconscious self before unearthing the true self inside. Not only do we have to deal with shutting out our material existence, but now we have to somehow shut out a part of ourselves that we cannot even reach. Also, Nietzsche's declaration that "God is dead," (a move paved by Kant's "transcendental ego" and Kierkegaard's pathos of authenticity), gives human beings creative power over their own individuality. This creative individualism, according to Charles Taylor, is "what many people consider the finest achievement of modern civilization" as we can finally choose who we want to be, discover our own true self, without leaning on a

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cosmic order rooted in religious beliefs—beliefs that had been shaken in modernism's

wake (*Ethics* 2). One thing that cannot be denied is the influence of our material

existence on our being as we saw first-hand how industrialism and war wrecked psyches

beyond repair. Perhaps this damage is why the idea of authenticity changes from a solid

and reachable goal to an endless process with no promise of a better life. But the search

cannot end because to not "create or actualize our authentic selfhoods…would be

spiritual suicide" (Golomb 77).

Nietzsche, in response to this lack of an ending, provides modern readers with the

ultimate authentic paradigm: Zarathustra. With God dead, Nietzsche's Zarathustra takes

center stage as the supreme authentic being to inspire readers to attempt to emulate if

they ever hope to transcend above an animalistic life. I say "attempt" because, as Jacob

Golomb states, Zarathustra "can only inspire us to try to become authentic, to be what we

really are," much like the sun-metaphor intimates that Zarathustra is not of this world but

is still an important element of life at the end of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra": "Thus spoke

Zarathustra, and he left his cave, glowing and strong as the morning sun that comes out of

the dark mountains" (439). Something Golomb does not mention, however, is how this

ending seems to be a response to Plato's Cave. While Plato advocates the philosopher

come back into the cave to try to persuade those unfortunate souls within of the truth,

Zarathustra does not—in fact, it's not clear where he goes. This disconnect between

Zarathustra and the people he tries to persuade to accept an authentic existence further

proves Golomb's point of Zarathustra as an ideal to strive for but never quite achieve.

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I'm also reminded of the end of *Sons and Lovers* when Paul Morel "walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence…walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly" (Lawrence 464). Paul also seeks an authentic existence, feeling himself "nothing," and sets out to search for it in the "glowing" lights of the industrialist city—a false sun of sorts—which leads me to further believe that Paul will not find this authentic self he desires.

This paradigm of Zarathustra can only take you so far, give you so much guidance, before it is up to you to create your own authentic existence. The process of authentic existence was one of acts for Nietzsche, not through examining our inner feelings as Rousseau advocates. His mantra "become who you are" is built upon action, not contemplation. Heidegger's path to authenticity is also paved with individual acts. To be an authentic self involves "choosing to choose" to "be-one's self" (Heidegger *Being and Time* 313). Thus, "to be 'authentic' or 'owned,' then, is to remain focused on the fact that, in all our actions, we are constituting ourselves as beings of a particular sort. Authenticity pertains not to *what* we do…it has to do with *how* we live" (Guignon 102). This version of authenticity is also an either/or decision rooted in traditional notions of authentic existence—you either are authentic, or you are not authentic.

Yet what and how we do and live does matter to some extent. Sartre's "existence before essence" acknowledges that "man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself…he will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself" (*Existentialism is a Humanism* 22).

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This concept closely ties him to John Locke and his tabula rasa soul. Instead of the passive tabula rasa of Locke, Sartre believes that we are what we make of ourselves—we have control over our actions and our actions create our essence. We must realize that we have the power, not a greater being like God, and only when we accept this responsibility for our own actions/sense of being can we be authentic.

And there is no one way, one source of action but many possibilities (making the journey murkier):

> By many ways, in many ways, I reached my truth: it was not on one ladder that I climbed to the height where my eye roams over my distance. And it was only reluctantly that I ever inquired about the way: that always offended my taste. I preferred to question and try out the ways themselves …'This is my way; where is yours?'—thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the* way—that does not exist. (Nietzsche "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" 307)

This journey towards authenticity is also a lonely endeavor. One size fits all does not, and will not, apply. One path will not work either. Even though these paths can be lonely, we cannot (and should not) ignore completely our relations to others as these relationships help us determine who we are as individuals. Heidegger knows we cannot shut out the outside world if we want to achieve authenticity since, for him, "*Authentic Being-one's-Self* does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they'; *it is rather an existential modification of the*

'they'""(Heidegger *Being and Time* 168). Heidegger's *Dasein* can always slip back into inauthenticity by losing itself among its relationships with others, as the authentic self is not "as a static being, but only as asking, searching Becoming, that is, as a transcendent consciousness" (Golomb 96).

Sartre also feels one "cannot be anything…unless others acknowledge him as such. I cannot discover any truth whatsoever about myself except through the mediation of another. The other is *essential* to my existence, as well as to the knowledge I have of myself" (*Existentialism as a Humanism* 41 emphasis mine). Sartre labels this transcendence between the inner self and the outside world "existential humanism."

> This is humanism because we remind man that there is no legislator other than
> himself and that he must, in his abandoned state, make his own choices, and also
> because we show that it is not by turning inward, but by constantly seeking a goal
> outside of himself in the form of liberation, or of some special achievement, that
> man will realize himself as truly human. (*Existentialism is a Humanism* 53)

M.M. Bakhtin follows this line of thought, stating that "the most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness…I cannot become myself without another" ("Toward a Reworking" 287).

Bakhtin believes we need the perception of another to fill in any gaps in our flawed perception in a concept called "surplus of vision":

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The interlocative self is one that can change places with another—that it *must*, in fact, change places to see where it is. A logical implication of the fact that I can see things that you cannot, and you can see things that I cannot, is that our excess of seeing is defined by a lack of seeing: my excess is your lack, and vice versa. If we wish to overcome this lack, we try to see what is there *together*. (*Art and Answerability* xxvi)

Alessandro Ferrara notes that "all identities arise from interaction, but *authentic* identities have a distinctive quality. In Greek 'authentikos' derives from 'eauton' and 'theto,' where 'theto' is etymologically related to 'thesis.' Thus, 'authentic' refers to individuals who 'posit themselves' or, more freely, 'set themselves as a thesis'" (15). This does not mean that authenticity for Ferrara is free from intersubjective relationships. These relationships still affect our identities. But where authentic identities occur, we have "the capacity to express that *uniqueness* which has been socially constituted through the singularity and uniqueness of the formative contexts but which have no formative context as such can enjoin us to express" (15). This is what Ferrara calls "reflective authenticity."

Problems with the Process

While the idea of pursuing an authentic life, as a process, sounds like a powerful and life-affirming journey, the concept of authenticity does have its issues. One such issue is the open-endedness of a journey with no real end. In *Saint Genet: Actor and*

Martyr, Sartre writes that "we are beings whose being is perpetually in question" and that "to create oneself and to kill oneself come to the same thing" (60 and 167). To become authentic, one must continuously dismiss/destroy/or leave behind what is inauthentic. It is a search and it is a creative process, but a search and a process that will never end. A never-ending search can feel pointless since we want to achieve authentic existence during out lifetime—we want to *know* how it feels be truly authentic because we believe this feeling gives meaning to life.

Another problem with authenticity as a constant, unending process is that one can get lost as a result of all this movement with no clear direction, a risk Simone de Beauvoir points out "to exist genuinely is not to deny this spontaneous movement of my transcendence, but only to refuse to lose myself in it" (*Ethics of Ambiguity* 14). To lose oneself is a possibility since authenticity, for de Beauvoir, is a constant transcending of self: "I exist as an authentic subject, in a constantly renewed upspringing that is opposed to the fixed reality of things" (*Existentialism and Popular Wisdom* 212). We are never finished with creating our authentic self as it (like writing) is a process, not a product, which is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to define the term. The process of authenticity is a constant movement and transcendence. Because of this constant flux of identity, it is important to put boundaries on who we choose to become, to make these choices instead of letting the world and our relationships with others determine them. We have a responsibility for our own authentic existence and process.

We can also get lost searching for a whole authentic being if that "whole" being does not exist. For Heidegger, to care for someone means to care for a whole being—the essence of authenticity. However, Bakhtin argues that words like "wholeness" and "consummation' are relative in nature, and therefore "wholeness can never be absolute" (*Art and Answerability* x). This complicates the hope that a process toward authenticity can ever end if the very thing we are striving to become can never be validated by anyone else. Sometimes we need confirmation that we have achieved authentic existence that the event is not completely fabricated by our desire to be authentic, and validation from an outside source is imperative in this sense.

This process can also turn violent if outside influences fail to acknowledge our own existential boundaries. Beauvoir notes in "Pyrrhus and Cineas" that when we interact with others, we can either choose to let others' perception of us affect us or we can fight their perception and impose upon them our own perception of ourselves in order to change their perception of us. If we fail to persuade others to accept our version of our authentic selves, then we must resort to violence; as Beauvoir writes, "we are condemned to violence because man is divided and in conflict with himself, because men are separate and in conflict among themselves" and "renouncing the struggle would be renouncing the transcendence, renouncing being" ("Pyrrhus and Cineas" 138). If a person refuses to accept and validate our perception of ourselves, then we retaliate in violent measures in an attempt to force this other to accept us.

A final hindrance with the process towards authenticity is technology. Technology hinders the process because our relationship to technology is not free since we are constantly "on"; "Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 4). To unchain ourselves from technology, and free us up for our journey towards being, we must not see technology in terms of what it does for us (a means to an end) but see it as a revealing instrument. Heidegger tells us "if we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth" ("The Question" 12). Bruno Latour also agrees that technology is not a means to an end, noting "if there is an unworthy way to treat technologies, it lies in believing that they are means toward ends" (*An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* 219). Therefore, we cannot look at technology as "bad" or "good" but simply not "neutral" (219). We will come back to this concept later when I discuss composition theory. For now, it's important to recognize Heidegger's insistence that we not simply "be" but always question, always move forward, to eventually reach authentic existence.

Postmodernism Finds a New Path (of Sorts)

Postmodernism has taken the concept of the authentic self in a different direction. Instead of following premodern concepts of the authentic self (which usually required a complete inward turn to find authenticity) or modern concepts (which either followed premodern thought or required one to discover a true authentic self inward while

negotiating that self with outside forces to create a whole being), "some postmodern thinkers give up on the original conception of authenticity as a matter of being true to a substantial Real Me" and "make claim to a new ideal…the ideal of clear-sightedly and courageously embracing the fact that there is no 'true self' to be [and] recognizing that where we formerly had sought a true self, there is only an empty space, a gap or a lack" (Guignon 119). An important thinker who "dismiss (ed) the self as an empirical reality" was Jean Baudrillard (Holstein 57).

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard writes extensively on his concept of the simulacra, a simulation that "[substitutes] the signs of the real for the real" and "never again will the real have the chance to produce itself" (2). A simulacra, then, "has no relation to reality whatsoever—it is its own simulacra" (6). We see simulacrum everywhere in today's 21st century world, especially in films like *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*. These films force viewers to question traditional notions of reality by providing cleverly disguised simulacrum that eventually blur the lines between reality and fiction. Baudrillard also writes that "when everything is taken away, nothing is left. This is false" (143). He goes on to say that "this remainder never has an autonomous reality, nor its own place…it cannot be defined except as the remainder of the remainder" (143). This indefinable term is difficult to pin down, as "one never knows which is the remainder of the other" (143). But "all of the real is residual, and everything that is residual is destined to repeat itself indefinitely in phantasms" until the real is somehow resolved (146). Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder* is built heavily on Baudrillard's

remainder and I will explicate this term in more detail in Chapter Three. If all of life is a

remainder, and thus void of meaning, then it is impossible to try to find meaning in life.

Baudrillard blames the masses for the lack of meaning and that "there is no more hope for

meaning…meaning is mortal" (164). We decide what is meaningful, what is moral, and

because *we* decide (and not some higher power), our decisions are mortal and ultimately

flawed.

If all "meaning is mortal," then meaning is subjective and therefore not a natural

component of identity. In *The Authenticity Hoax,* Andrew Potter notes:

> We don't find our authentic self by peeling away the shell of civilization until we
>
> reach the hard nut of the natural self at the core. The self is more like an onion;
>
> there is no 'natural self' to be found at the center because there is no center.
>
> Authenticity becomes redefined as the ongoing process of filtering our
>
> experiences through our most deeply felt emotions and constantly interpreting and
>
> reinterpreting our lives until we find a story that is uniquely our own. (74)

These responses are reactionary to the crisis of the self in postmodernity, but there is

another option to this crisis. This option is not to react to the changes but try to

"reconceptualize the self as a form of working subjectivity," an option that "formulates a

self that not only is a polysemic product of experience, but also a byproduct of practices

that diversely construct it in response to varied senses of what it could, or need, be"

(Holstein 57). This is an attempt to keep the postmodern self similar to the version of the

authentic modern self mentioned above. Thus, the postmodern self is often considered

an extended self, meaning that "my identity is tied into the wider context of the world,

with the specific gods and spirits that inhabit that world, with my tribe, kinship system,

and family, and with those who have come before and those who are yet to come"

(Guignon 18). In this context, the postmodern self is still considered unique with an

inner core of truth that finds solid footing within the outside world, what Charles Taylor

calls "recognizing a horizon of significance" (*The Ethics of Authenticity* 53).

This "horizon of significance" is often seen in language and context of the self

(think social-constructivists in composition theory). It creates a "positive framing of the

postmodern condition of the self that restores our confidence in the self's reality, but in

new terms" (Holstein 71). These "new terms" are "as much narratively constituted as

actually lived…[transforming] the either/or division between skeptical and affirmative

postmodernisms, making the division itself…a matter of practical usage" (71). Even

though meaning is mortal, if we can find a "horizon of significance" within our meanings

then we can argue our morals and ethics as intellectually sound.

Charles Taylor explicates upon these thoughts in his book *The Ethics of*

Authenticity. He argues that we cannot hope to discover our authentic self if we dismiss

the possibility that part of us is formed by our relationships with others, claiming "that

modes that opt for self-fulfillment without regard (a) to the demands of our ties with

others or (b) to demands of any kind emanating from something more or other than

human desires or aspirations are self-defeating, that they destroy the conditions for

realizing authenticity itself" (*Ethics* 35). Thus, part of our authentic selves is a discovery of what is inside of us already but also a construction based upon our relationships with others, tying the postmodern and the modern conception that Sartre advocated together. Taylor holds on to the hope that each of us still has an authentic and individual core that is unsullied by materialism and outside influences.

With today's onslaught of digital technology, the belief that there truly is a single authentic core inside each one of us starts to dissipate. Social networks like MySpace and Facebook encourage us to construct different identities and follow specific paradigms of identity, ultimately dismissing the notion that there is anything truly unique and authentic about any of us—at least when compared to romantic notions of the self. This "fragmentation of self-conceptions corresponds to a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships" and "these relationships pull us in a myriad of directions, inviting us to play such a variety of roles that the very concept of an 'authentic self' with knowable characteristics recedes from view" (Gergen 7). Sherry Turkle addresses these "roles" when she notes that "social media ask us to represent ourselves in simplified ways" (*Alone* 185) as we are each given a template to fill out that is meant to show others who we are. Instead of questioning this template, many of us just quietly answer the questions and move along. Oftentimes, the desire to exaggerate or change things about each one of us becomes too great to ignore since "on social-networking sites such as Facebook, we think we will be presenting ourselves, but our profile ends up as somebody else—often the fantasy of who we want to be" (Turkle *Alone* 153). For example, the

choices you make regarding what you post on your profile page represent the ideal self you wish you were in life outside of cyberspace. I only post profile pictures that are flattering or photo shopped representations, uploading my own simulacrum online in an attempt to convince others online that *this* is what I want you to think of when you see and think of me.

One need only tune into the popular television show *Catfish* every week to watch another hapless teenager's heart break at the realization that the person whom he or she fell in love with online is not at all what an online profile represents—or perhaps fell in love with the profile itself. The "catfish" often fears dismissal from friendship and love based upon physical appearances and hides behind a false image. After all, "at the screen, you have a chance to write yourself into the person you want to be" (Turkle *Alone* 188). In this light, our lives take a narrativist turn where "life is…an open-ended and inconclusive project" that we constantly build and change through our online identities (Guignon 129).

But can feelings be genuine if they are based upon a false avatar? Can there be a connection of souls over a flawed technology? Based upon the romantic notion of authenticity, the answer is an emphatic no. For many psychologists, a person's identity is created primarily through the relationship with the human mother, not a motherboard. D.W. Winnicott advocates this theory, claiming "with 'the care that it receives from its mother' each infant is able to have a personal existence, and so begins to build up what might be called *a continuity of being*" (Winnicott 594).

However, "children in a computer culture are touched by the technology in ways that set them apart from the generations that have come before" (Turkle *Second Self* 155). This statement does not come as a surprise since "it is well known that the brain's plasticity is an inherent biological trait; humans are born with their nervous system ready to be reconfigured in response to their environments (Hayles *Electronic Literature* 114). As a result of this trait, "children growing up in media-rich environments literally have brains wired differently than humans who did not come to maturity in such conditions" (Hayles 114). Also, in a recent article from the Center for Brain Health at UT-Dallas, author Dr. Sandra Bond Chapman cites a study in her article that found "30% of 2-5 year olds know how to operate a smart phone or tablet computer and 61% can play a basic computer game" (Chapman "Is Your Brain"). Clearly, today's youth are connected to digital technology far more than any other generation to this date.

In a *Wired* article by Nicholas Carr, Carr cites writes about an earlier study on brain activity and internet use conducted by researcher Gary Small who noted that his findings showed "the current explosion of digital technology not only is changing the way we live and communicate, but is rapidly and profoundly altering our brains" ("Author Nicholas Carr"). Chapman also notes that "the human brain is rewired moment to moment by how it is used" ("Is Your Brain"). What's even more interesting is that this rewiring of the brain has led Nicholas Carr, author of *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, to believe that "what we're experiencing is, in a metaphorical sense, a reversal of the early trajectory of civilization: We are evolving from cultivators

of personal knowledge into hunters and gatherers in the electronic data forest" ("Author Nicholas Carr"). While this evolution may indeed be true, Carr is only thinking of how searching for information on the internet has led to this new mindset—but what about the social networks and communicative uses of digital technology that so many of us use the internet for? Not everything we do online is root in informational and instructional purposes.

Because of our constant connection to digital technologies, we must admit that "this digital culture is changing our brains, and the pervasive reliance on portable devices has caused a constant state of divided attention" (Chapman "Is Your Brain"). As a result of this "divided attention," there is the constant worry that we are "becoming addicted to being distracted" (Chapman). This addiction has many scientists worried that brain health is deteriorating with each text message sent. While this may be a warranted warning, I believe that it does not change the fact that students today are indeed addicted to technology and this addiction has not only led to divided attentions but also divided identities. These dividual identities are now the new authentic self of today.

Today's adolescents "integrate their computer experience into their developing identities that have nothing to do with becoming computer experts. They use programming as a canvas for personal concerns. They use the computer as a constructive as well as a projective medium" (Turkle *Second Self* 132). We are no longer using technology to reveal Being, but to create Being through various social network sites. Our constant use of technology has melded the inner and outer worlds together, creating an

entirely new type of Being—but Nietzsche and others should not see this in such a negative light. After all, we must ask this question (as Bruno Latour does): "Why have the Moderns restricted themselves to such a small number of *ontological templates* whereas in other areas they have caused so many innovations, transformations, revolutions to proliferate?" (*An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* 163). There is more than one way to *be*—we shouldn't limit ourselves to traditional binary modes of existence.

Trauma as a catalyst for identity change (and brain rewiring) is nothing new. One only needs to look at how British writers adapted to the traumas associated with two world wars. What is new is accepting these changes as authentic instead of seeing them as inauthentic deviants from the norm that need to be "fixed." Materialism and technology are not negative things that have destroyed our humanity—these things have simply changed what it means to be human. What was once considered inauthentic is now the new authentic. While some of us see the modern/postmodern world as a potential destroyer of authenticity, others do not and see advances in technology as advancing what it means to be human—or at least blur the lines between what it means to be human and what it means to be a machine. N. Katherine Hayles is one such theorist who sees the blur between cognition and embodiment brought on by a posthuman construct as a positive interaction as her "dream is a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and understands human life is embedded in a material

world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continued survival" (Hayles *How We Became* 5) In her book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Hayles argues that a "constant theme" regarding the posthuman is "the union of the human with the intelligent machine" (2). Such a union, she explains, "configures a human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" as "there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (3). Thus, "the posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). This has become the case in today's adolescents—that there is no romantic notion of the authentic self. What was once considered inauthentic (the constructive self based upon materialistic/technological concerns) is the new posthuman authentic self of today.

For example, the popular social network Facebook gives users the ability to construct and reconstruct various identities in order to secure and maintain a specific persona to various audiences. Thus, a Facebook page becomes a type of argument for a certain idea of the self that users work to prove every day. In my article "Perelman, Foucault, and Social Networking: How Facebook and Audience Perception Can Spark Critical Thinking in the Composition Classroom" I wrote:

When we create arguments, we constantly make decisions about what information

to bring to the forefront and what information to ignore or deliberately suppress in

order to gain audience adherence. In this light, a student's profile page becomes a

type of argument for their particular audience, an argument that tries to

communicate a certain image of themselves that complies with the values

associated with their particular audience. If that online image fails to comply with

the values of their virtual friends, then the student-user risks online attacks, loss of

friends and, eventually, a lowered online status that could lead to a social "virtual

death."

Also, the influence of Facebook and other technologies like cell phones has changed the

way many of us speak and write, as well as how we perceive the world. We take a photo

and are told by others that it's a "profile pic." We say "LOL" or "WTF" when speaking

with friends. Student essays also contain text-speak to the point of driving English

teachers to the edges of proverbial cliffs. Instructors are not immune to this issue. I

recently taught an online course and constantly used "NLT" (No Later Than) and

assumed students knew what it meant. In an article for *BBCNews.com*, the question of

whether or not text speak is slowly replacing standard language was asked (as well as

several examples of famous speeches whittled down to text-speak) ("Is Txt Mightier than

the Word?").

With the immersion of our different identities through various digital

technologies, the possibility of ever looking past our material existence and reaching

something unique apart of our material existence is no longer possible because we are so immersed in these technologies. According to the "Manifesto of Inauthenticity" penned by the International Necronautical Society, or INS, (helmed by British author Tom McCarthy), we can never completely transcend our material existence because there is always a material remainder (a point he illustrates powerfully in his novel *Remainder*). The only reality is death—everything else is inauthentic at its core (including human beings) as everything is rooted in a materialistic (and therefore inherently inauthentic as materialism is not often considered "natural") facticity. What this group calls the "traumatic event of materiality" prevents us from reaching a traditional view of authenticity as our inner selves are inauthentic in comparison due to our connection to materialism and technology. We are nothing but layers of different selves built upon technologies—even if we continuously peel away at our identities, we will never reach a unique core because that core is materialistic in nature. It should be noted that McCarthy and the INS wrote these manifestos with tongue firmly in cheek. However, as with any piece of writing, there is some truth in these ideas that we should not ignore.

This idea is a difficult one accept since the concept and desire for authenticity has haunted the fields of philosophy, literary studies, and psychology. Today, we look back at these older concepts of an authentic being, and we often feel as if we are missing something that digital technology has taken away from us—that we are not really living like it seems as if those in the past lived. What is "real" is not real—we cannot even

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define this term but we crave it all the same. In his book *Reality Hunger*, David Shields claims:

> In this rush of technological innovation, we've lost something along the way and are going back to try to find it, but we don't know what that thing is. Eating genetically altered, neon-orange bananas, we aren't getting what we need, and we know something is missing. We're clinging to anything that seems 'real' or organic or authentic. We want rougher sounds, rougher images, raw footage, uncensored by high technology and the powers that be. (92)

American author Walker Percy also discusses this loss of reality, and the desire for it to return, while looking at the Grand Canyon in his essay "The Loss of the Creature":

> Seeing the canyon is made even more difficult by what the sight- seer does when the moment arrives, when sovereign knower confronts the thing to be known. Instead of looking at it, he photographs it. There is no confrontation at all. At the end of' forty years of preformulation and with the Grand Canyon yawning at his feet, what does he do? He waives his right of seeing and knowing and records symbols for the next forty years. For him there is no present; there is only the past of what has been formulated and seen and the future of what has been formulated and not seen. The present is surrendered to the past and the future. (47-8)

Percy brilliantly explains how we "see" things through a device, thus questioning whether or not we truly "see" anything if what we view is mediated through a machine.

This "desire for authenticity can lead people to extremes of self-sacrifice and risk" while "the loss of authenticity can be a source of grief and despair" (Lindholm 1). This feeling of grief is perhaps why, as a society, authenticity as a word and as a concept has grown as a popular topic of conversation over the past years. One need only type in the word "authentic" into Google's Ngram Viewer (an application that graphs certain phrases/words found in books over a selected period of time) to see the steady rise of the word in American English books from 1980 to today—dates that correspond with the rising prominence of digital technologies. The same trend is echoed in English fiction, with a slight decline in 2004 before rising abruptly in 2005-08.

Authenticity discourse is also prominent in non-literary discussions. Words like "organic," "true story," "real thing" are seen on grocery shelves, movie trailers, and commercials everywhere you look, as well as the concept that feeling is a genuine and authentic part of humanity, proving to us again and again that "the dominant trope for personal authenticity in modern America is emotivism—the notion that feeling is the most potent and real aspect of the self" (Lindholm 65). There has also been a rise in "found footage" films—films that we know as an audience are not "authentic" but look the part (*V/H/S* and *V/H/S 2* come instantly to mind). Memoirs are one of the best-selling genres today and "mockumentaries" have entered the film lexicon as films that look and feel like documentaries but are falsified to some extent, questioning the idea of the validity of traditional documentaries. "Truthiness" also entered the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a word coined by comedian Stephen Colbert, and seems to sum up our

current relationship with the traditional concept of authenticity nicely: "the quality of seeming or being felt to be true, even if not necessarily true." The word was so popular that it was chosen by the American Dialect Society as the 2005 Word of the Year.

The search for authenticity (and the feeling that this search is moot today) is a powerful discourse in this digital technological world, even though this digital and technological world has changed the original concept of what it means to be authentic. Unfortunately, searching for an old version of authenticity in a posthuman technological world will only end in heartache and disappointment as "the contemporary struggle for the genuine, authentic forms of living cannot be the solution to our problem, because it is the cause" (Potter 14). Our search for romantic notions of authenticity becomes a search for social status—to claim you are more 'real' than someone else because you are 'authentic.' It creates exactly what it claims to destroy—it is "a socially destructive form of status-seeking" (Potter 267). What was once considered "deviant" behavior (spending time on the computer instead of outside) is now the norm, though many of us still try to fight this realization as "defenders of 'old' standards" seek to resist this shifting of what is considered norm or authentic and thus create a type of "cultural war" between the older generation's concept of authenticity and the newer authentic dividual self (Moynihan 19). This is a war the romantics cannot win and their efforts only put "societies under stress, much like individuals" as they "turn to pain killers of various kinds that end up concealing real damage" (30).

What Holstein and Gubrium have called a pessimistic reaction to postmodernism, "a world in which there really isn't a paramount self," perhaps needs a new narrative framework and be seen not as a negative response but as a new version of what it means to be authentic today. Before ringing the warning alarm, as many psychologists and philosophers have urged us to do, perhaps it is time to change what our notion of authenticity is to adapt to this new, digitized self.

In spite of the ongoing search and desire for the older concepts of authenticity, literature and culture today are starting to experiment with the notion that there is a new kind of authenticity—one that is materialistic and digital at its core. As we will see in further chapters, this discourse of authenticity has ebbed and flowed throughout culture, literature, and composition studies. However, where literature and culture have adapted with these modern and postmodern concepts of authenticity, composition studies as a discipline have only participated to a certain point before turning away from controversial identity changes brought about by the trauma of digital materialism.

CHAPTER II

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND AUTHENTICITY

"To realize that all your life…it was all the same thing. It's all the same dream; the

dream that you had inside a locked room. That dream about being a person. And, like a

lot of dreams, there's a monster at the end of it." Rust Cohle *True Detective*

Computer Culture

If I were to tell you that we are currently living within a technological ecosystem,

odds are that you would not disagree with me. Yet, digital technologies are quite literally

everywhere; from cell phones to tablets, laptops to robots, our lives are inundated with

artificial life forms that force us to see our lives in a different light. As a result of this

cultural climate, a lot of familiar notions of "human" feelings and beliefs have changed.

Sherry Turkle is correct when she observes the relationship between humans and digital

objects and states that "people's interest in them indicates that traditional notions of

authenticity are in crisis" because of the freedom to "play" with identity in an online

realm ("Authenticity in the Age" 502). While some may fear this crisis as a signal of the

end of humanity, others (including myself) see this as an opportunity to adapt and rewrite

what it means to be an authentic person in a digitized culture. Computers, at one time,

were considered primarily tools to enhance our psyches. Now, it seems as if computers are changing the very meaning of what it means to be an authentic person.

In a recent *Time* article entitled, "The New Greatest Generation," authors Joel Stein and Josh Sanburn write about the generation of students born between 1980 to 2000, dubbing this generation "millennials." Their description of the people in this generation, many of whom are just now entering college, presents them in a less than favorable light:

> In the U.S., millennials are the children of baby boomers, who are also known as the Me Generation, who then produced the Me Me Me Generation, whose selfishness technology has only exacerbated. Whereas in the 1950s families displayed a wedding photo, a school photo and maybe a military photo in their homes, the average middle-class American family today walks amid 85 pictures of themselves and their pets. Millennials have come of age in the era of the quantified self, recording their daily steps on FitBit, their whereabouts every hour of every day on PlaceMe and their genetic data on 23 and Me. (Stein and Sanburn)

Stein and Sanburn give some of the blame for the rampant narcissism to overzealous parents who hoped to instill self-esteem in their children, but I also believe that the focus on "me" is a defense mechanism for the trauma of digital technologies. Stein and Sanburn go on to write that "millennials are interacting all day but almost entirely

through a screen. You've seen them at bars, sitting next to one another and texting…Seventy percent of them check their phones every hour, and many experience phantom pocket-vibration syndrome." This co-dependency on digital devices ultimately traumatizes many of our students. Stein seems to sense this trauma as he believes the "millennials' perceived entitlement is not a result of overprotection but an adaptation to a world of abundance" ("The New Greatest Generation"). Millennials adapt to the trauma of digital materialism, and this adaptation has been sadly mistaken for narcissism as we apply an outdated romantic notion of authenticity to a generation who can no longer compute that version.

The Metanarrative of Authenticity

Authenticity as a discourse is primarily one in the tradition of a premodern metanarrative that attempts to persuade others that *this* idea of humanity is more authentic (and therefore more moral) than *that* perception. In this case, the premodern notion of authenticity is, as mentioned earlier, one of a unique core found within each of us that makes us each individual and authentic. However, modernity and postmodernity challenges such metanarratives as truthful accounts of reality. While many other metanarratives (e.g. religious and western metanarratives) have arguably been successfully dismantled by postmodernism and the rejection of an absolute truth, the metanarrative of authenticity still tries to put a stranglehold on our perception of identity as we struggle to understand what it means to be human in a posthuman and digital world by looking towards an older method of authentic identity. However, postmodernism

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rejects the possibility of an absolute truth—and this includes rejection of the possibility

of an absolute definition of what it means to be an authentic and true individual.

According to Fredric Jameson, postmodernism is "a periodizing concept whose

function is to correlate the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic

order" ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 3). Today's "new type of social life" is

digital and dividual in nature, and the concept of authenticity needs to "correlate" to this

definition in order to make sense of (and keep up with) these emerging concepts of

society and humanity. Jameson points out that the "modernist aesthetic" that heralds the

concept of "a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality" is

essentially "a thing of the past" and, therefore, "dead" ("Postmodernism and Consumer

Society" 6-7). This important essay was delivered in 1982, long before the world we live

in today with hand-held digital devices and social network sites. If the unique individual

was "dead" then, the concept is dust and ashes now.

We can also tie this concept to Marshall McLuhan's point regarding "The

Newtonian God" as dead. In his classic work *The Medium is the Massage,* he designates

the Newtonian God as "the God who made a clock-like universe, wound it, and

withdrew" (146). What makes this God dead is also what makes the unique individual

dead as "the groundrule of that universe, upon which so much of our Western world is

built, has dissolved" (McLuhan 146). To be clear, I am not advocating that today's

authentic self is any less unique than the premodern version. However, what makes this

new authentic self unique is what made the premodern authentic self not unique—the

ability to split the self into many identities, each one just as real and authentic as the next. The specter of the premodern authentic self still haunts us and claims we are not engaging in "real" relationships because we prefer to text our friends rather than meet with them face-to-face.

In spite of this haunting, other forms of identification that are not "real" in the romantic sense are accepted as legitimate, and even legal, representations of ourselves. One immediate example that comes to mind are documents that require a signature and allow an electronic signature. Students are well aware of this newer form of authentic identification when applying for student loans as FAFSA requires electronic signatures in the form of a PIN number as proof of authenticity. We also use electronic signatures when we file our taxes every year online. In order to exorcise this specter we need to understand how McCarthy's "traumatic event of materiality" is tied to digital technologies so that we can see our many identities online not as false representations of ourselves but as a version of this new authentic postmodern self.

Technology as a Trauma

"The medium, or process, of our time—electric technology—is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life."

Marshall McLuhan *The Medium is the Massage*

In "The Question of Concerning Technology," Heidegger warns readers of the dangers of seeing and treating technology in a neutral way. We are, in his words,

"chained to technology"—but this fact is only undesirable "when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology" (1). This essay was published in 1977—in 2014, we are more than just chained to digital technology. Digital technologies affect the way we speak, act, and (ultimately) how we perceive ourselves and what it means to be an authentic person—we are ontologically fused with our devices and this fusion traumatizes our beings, creating the new dividual authentic self. This is what Heidegger feared would happen, because he believed in the one true authentic self:

> We depend on technical devices; they even challenge us to ever greater advances. But suddenly and unaware we find ourselves firmly shackled to these technical devices that we fall into bondage to them…We can use technical devices, and yet with proper use also keep ourselves free of them, that we may let go of them any time. We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect *our inner and real core.*" ("Memorial Address" 53-4 emphasis mine)

To be "shackled" is to be imprisoned while Turkle's term "tethered" evokes images of reciprocal attachment as we can easily untie ourselves, but we choose not to. These two philosophers offer up examples of the two main technological belief systems: the determinists and the instrumentalists.

Nicholas Carr outlines these two belief systems in his book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. The determinists believe that technology influences us while the instrumentalists believe that we influence technology and are in control of the technologies we use.

While technologies may begin as instruments, in time (and with constant use) these technologies become something more as they have a hegemonic nature. Carr notes that "the tight bonds we form with our tools go both ways. Even as our technologies become extensions of ourselves, we become extensions of our technologies" (209). As a result of these extensions, "every tool imposes limitations even as it opens possibilities. The more we use it, the more we mold ourselves to its form and function" (209). These observations are especially true regarding our digital technologies. Twitter, for example, forces us to only use 140 characters in each tweet. Therefore, when I want to tweet something, I have to be careful to state my point within these limitations and adapt my message accordingly. Katherine N. Halyes notes that "as digital media, including networked and programmable desktop stations, mobile devices, and other computational media embedded in the environment, become more pervasive, they push us in the direction of faster communication, more intense and varied information streams, more integration of humans and intelligent machines, and more interactions of language with code" (*How We Think* 11).

The idea that these digital technologies "push us" suggests a power relationship is at play between humans and digital technologies. As a result of our relationship with

these digital tools, we are nothing more than Foucault's "docile bodies" that, once considered docile, "may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" by these technologies (*Discipline and Punish* 136). In this sense, the computer is not a tool but a mirror, showing us what we are like through a very limited perception. However, this metaphor is only accurate if we passively interact with digital technologies (something I will touch on later in this chapter). According to Sherry Turkle, "the computer has become even more than tool and mirror: We are able to step through the looking glass. We are learning to live in virtual worlds" (*Life on The Screen* 9). Regardless of how we interact (or passively accept) our relationship with technology, we can no longer deny that we are in a determinist age of digital.

Ontological Value and Disappearance of Time/Space Traumas

Today's post 9-11 nation can easily be termed post-traumatic. After all, "in a wound culture, life is lived not as life but as survival" (Worsham 171). But how is technology considered a traumatic event? Trauma is "an overwhelming, catastrophic event, one that occurs too unexpectedly to be consciously assimilated and known" (Worsham 173). A traumatic event, then, "is one that, in its unexpectedness and horror, overwhelms every resource that the individual or community has to understand to make sense of the event, leaving one or both feeling utterly helpless in the face of a force that is perceived to be psychically, if not also physically, life-threatening" (173). After a trauma has occurred, "not only identity but this psychic skin must be constructed entirely anew and in the context of posttraumatic suffering" (175).

This determinist age results in digital technologies traumatizing us to the point that we seek out dividual online identities through various social network sites. But before I talk about the result of the trauma, I must first explain how the trauma occurred in the first place. Digital technologies traumatize our identities for two main reasons. The first reason is because we give digital technologies ontological value—a move closely tied to determinism.

To be a determinist is to accept the possibility that humans can be influenced by a digital machine and that perhaps humans are not the center of the universe. This idea ties into the demise of all grand narratives in the world of postmodernism, giving rise to the theory of flat ontology. According to Levi R. Bryant, flat ontology consists of four main theses:

1. "...flat ontology rejects any ontology of transcendence or presence that privileges one sort of entity as the origin of all others and as fully present to itself" (*The Democracy* 245-46).

2. "…flat ontology signifies that the world or the universe does not exist" (meaning there is no meta-narrative/"super-object") (246).

3. "…flat ontology refuses to privilege the subject-object, human-world relation as either a) a form of metaphysical relation different in kind from other relations between objects, and that b) refuses to treat the subject-object relation as implicitly included in every form of object-object relation" (246).

4. "…flat ontology argues that all entities are on equal ontological footing and that no entity, whether artificial or natural, symbolic or physical, possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects" (246).

For the purpose of this dissertation, I want to focus on the final thesis and how this shift of ontology towards objects ultimately responds to the "traumatic event of materiality" and, as a result, the updated version of the protean self.

As noted above, Bryant notes that "flat ontology argues that all entities are on equal ontological footing" (246). Ian Bogost clarifies this concept further, adding that with flat ontology "there is no ur-thing, no container, no vessel, no concept that sits above being such that it can include all aspects of it holistically and incontrovertibility" (12). With the grand narrative of the world (and human beings as the center of this world) broken down due to postmodernism, the playing field between objects and human beings is level—flat, if you will. It is only when we are on the same ontological level that we can be affected by the tools we use on an everyday basis. Many theorists like to file digital technologies under the "tool" metaphor because it implies the opposite of what flat ontology prescribes. When we call a computer a "tool," this "metaphor tends to mask the political dimensions of computers" and "technology is considered to be neutral" and thus "indifferent to politics" (Selber 38-39). In this view, the power is all in the hands of the user and the tool is an empty vessel. I associate these beliefs with Jacques Ellul when he writes that "man in his hubris…still believes that his mind controls technology, that he can impose any value, any meaning upon it" ("The 'Autonomy'" 437).

Yet flat ontology believes that the tools we use are not "neutral" but are very much ontologically sound and therefore able to influence us in various ways. We adapt *how* we communicate based upon the method of communication. When I transfer a traditional print article into a PowerPoint presentation, I must adapt the original text to fit this other mode. I make decisions on what to leave in, what to leave out, and how to present traditional text into a more visual argument. In this perspective, "modern technologies…behave like ecosystems" and "when we intervene here, unexpected consequences pop up there" (Tiles "Conflicting Visions"255).

Because these tools (or digital entities) influence us and hold a lot of power over us and our daily lives, there is a shock to our own ontological systems that causes us to break down our concept of identity into fragments. Part of why this is a shock to us is because we still wrestle with the ancient mistrust of technologies (or the specter of Heidegger) and the romantic notion regarding identity and technology:

> …the romantic way of being-with technology can thus be characterized by a pluralism of ideas that continue a critical uneasiness: (1) the will to technology is a necessary self-creative act, which nevertheless tends to overstep its rightful bounds; (2) technology makes possible a new material freedom but alienates from the decisive strength to exercise it and creates wealth while undermining social affection; (3) scientific knowledge and reason are criticized in the name of imagination; and (4) artifacts are characterized more by process than by structure

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and invested with a new ambiguity associated with the category of the sublime. (Mitcham 534)

Basically, we like what technology can do for us but, at the same time, are uneasy with the perception that technology weakens our personal bonds with each other and with ourselves. For one philosophers (e.g. Heidegger), "technology is primarily conceived as a form of alienation: it alienates human beings from themselves in preventing them from achieving authentic existence, and it alienates human beings from the world in denying them a meaningful place to exist" (Verbeek 99). We would not feel uneasy if we understood that the authentic individual of the past is no longer plausible, but there is still pressure to be this type of being and our inability to deal with this realization results in an ontological shock to our systems.

But this shock is still a chosen shock since we often choose (depending upon access) whether or not to use these digital technologies in our lives. After all, "people are seen as making strategic, and usually rational, choices about which media they use for differing purposes" (Baym 27). Therefore, this "change happens at an individual rather than a societal level" (27). The choices we make regarding what digital technology we use may begin with this optimistic idea that we are in control, but over time our reliance on these digital devices and on the Internet ultimately flip that control on its head. Also, Millennials never *chose* this path; it has been given to them by adults in charge, placed into their tiny hands before a word was ever spoken from their mouths.

The second reason digital technologies traumatize us is because the use of these technologies blurs the concept of time and space to the extent that neither exist as they once did. This mix of past and present brought on by digital technologies is what author Paul Ford terms a "history glut" as "the Internet has muddled the line between past and present" ("Netflix and Google Books Are Blurring"). He notes that "we're approaching an odd sort of asymptote, as our past gets closer and closer to the present and the line separating our now from our then dissolves" ("Netflix and Google Books are Blurring"). Digital technologies offer us an instantaneous life that allows us to be present but at a distance, at once in the moment and in the past. In this sense, "'time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished" and "we now live in a global village…a simultaneous happening" (McLuhan 630). Paul Virilo explains this notion in his book *Open Sky*:

> How can we really live if there is no more here and if everything is now? How
> can we survive the instantaneous telescoping of a reality that has become
> ubiquitous, breaking up into two orders of time, each as real as the other: that of
> presence of here and now, and that of a telepresence at a distance, beyond the
> horizon of tangible appearances? How can we rationally manage the split, not
> only between virtual and actual realities but, more to the point, between the
> apparent horizon and the transparent horizon of a screen that suddenly opens up a
> kind of temporal window for us to interact elsewhere, often a long way away?
> (Virilo 37-38)

Before I answer these questions, it's important to first unpack the idea of "instantaneous telescoping of reality" caused by digital technologies that traumatize us to the point of creating a new protean self to survive. According to Virilo, "we are seeing the beginnings of a '*generalized arrival*' whereby everything arrives without having to leave, the nineteenth century's elimination of the journey…combining with the abolition of *departure* at the end of the twentieth, the journey thereby losing its successive components and being overtaken by *arrival* alone" (*Open Sky* 16). Sometimes, I never sign out of Facebook and I receive immediate updates when someone posts on my wall. The same can be said about texting; my phone is always on and available to receive instant messages at any time of the day. Since we are living in a world where we are constantly "on," there is no "off" time.

A problem with being constantly "on" is that we are constantly being watched by others which is traumatizing because we fear how others may react to us at any moment. A tweet is never really deleted; even if I post the tweet and immediately delete it, that tweet lives on in cyberspace forever if someone notices it the moment I post it and captures a screenshot of my tweet. The trauma associated with constantly being watched evokes the image of Bentham's panopticon. As Michel Foucault notes regarding the ever-vigil figure, the "major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (*Discipline and Punish* 201). One goal of the panopticon is to consolidate human individuality into one faceless mass. Aware of this goal, digital users today respond to

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the trauma of the digital panopticon around them by splitting up their identities throughout various social media networks as this move "makes it much less manageable than a unity" (219). A LinkedIn profile displays a specific persona while a MySpace account displays another persona. We split into dividuals to remain authentic in this new digital world in order to avoid easy grouping and, with time, toward being controlled by these digital devices around us.

The revolutionary railroads and telegraph machines of the Industrial age made the world a smaller place, both physically and temporally. Today, we can travel thousands of miles without getting up from our seats and can connect with friends instantaneously through cell phones. While some may celebrate the ability to connect and "travel" all over the world, we suffer ontologically from the complete lack of space and time as what once was something we controlled now controls us as we constantly check our phones for updates and messages from friends and family. As Virilo states, "all that remains is a **real instant** over which, in the end, no one has any control" (*Open Sky* 18).

If we truly are "beings in time," what does it mean when there is no time and no place to be in? What happens to our identities when a digital panopticon is watching us? To the traditional notion of authenticity? Marshall McLuhan makes a vital point regarding survival in an age of digital technology when he writes that "survival is not possible if one approaches his environment, the social drama, with a fixed, unchangeable point of view—the witless repetitive response to the unperceived" (*The Medium is the Massage* 10). The old version of authentic self, then, cannot survive in this digital age

and any attempt to keep it will be in vain (remember Potter and the concept of authenticity as a hoax). Jameson's declaration of that unique individual's death can no longer be ignored in today's 21st century digitized world.

Updating the Protean Self

"Formerly, the problem was to invent new forms of labor-saving. Today, the reverse is the problem. Now we have to adjust, not to invent." Marshall McLuhan *The Medium is the Massage*

In 1993, Robert Lifton coined the term "the protean self." Twenty years later, the term is even more important today than it was then. Named after the god known for the ability to shift into various shapes and forms, the protean self is the result of our response to the feeling that "we are becoming fluid and many-sided" (Lifton 1). As social networks encourage us to practice at identities, and to embrace various kinds of identity, the concept of a protean self is still relevant today. After all, the protean self is a response to "a sense of self appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our time" and our time, as discussed in prior chapters, is very restless as far as our identity is concerned (1). This restlessness leads to self-fragmentation to adapt to our changing environments. In *Ontology of the Accident*, Catherine Malabou writes that "as a result of serious trauma, or sometimes for no reason at all, the path splits and a new, unprecedented persona comes to live with the former person, and eventually takes up all the room" (1). Therefore, "we must all of us recognize that we might, one day, become someone else, an absolute other, someone who will never be reconciled with themselves again, someone who will be this form of us without redemption or atonement, without last wishes, this damned form,

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outside of time" (2-3). However, like Lifton, Malabou sees the value in fragmentation as

a kind of survival mechanism, noting that "construction is counter-balanced by a form of

destruction" and that "it does not contradict life; it makes life possible" (*Ontology* 4).

The various identities we create online speak to the multiple selves each of us

have in the world of the Internet. Nancy K. Baym writes that "a search for Nancy Baym

will turn up my academic persona on my university website, a more well-rounded if trite

self-presentation on Twitter, and a more pop-culture-oriented self on my blog. All are

genuine parts of me, but online they are segmented into separate spaces where they can

become distinct identities" (106 emphasis mine). Baym's admission challenges romantic

ideas of a solid (and therefore authentic) concept of the self. Only in today's 21st century

digital world can one be "segmented" and "genuine" at the exact same time.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the terms "self" and "identity" are usually not

interchangeable. Yet, with the disembodiment associated with life on the computer

screen, a physical self seems less and less consistent (and prominent) as it once was. The

distinction that once existed between these two terms is blurred and no longer means

what it did ten years ago, much like the concept of an authentic self.

Lifton also mentions that part of our fragmentation is due to the flux associated

with surviving various forms of "death" and "renewal" (81). In this sense, we must

fragment in order to survive the shock of mortality and "spiritual assault" that comes with

living in the twentieth century. Today, in the twenty-first century, our fragmentation is

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different as the shock that sparked fragmentation is not from the horrors of two world wars or the destruction of faith through scientific discoveries but rather from materialism associated with digital technologies. The Net Generation is a group of survivors of this "traumatic event of materiality," and their ability to survive is based upon their ability to fragment their inner selves successfully.

In the first chapter, I mentioned Beauvoir and her thoughts on the fear of violence associated with the process of authenticity. According to Lifton, this violence can be deterred through fragmentation. He writes, "The protean self represents an alternative to violence. Violence always has an absolute quality: behavior is reduced to a single, narrow focus; and in that sense, violence is a dead end. Proteanism, in contrast, provides a capacity to avoid dead ends" (11). Proteanism does this because its very nature is one of choice—we *choose* how we fragment. One great thing about social networks is that they provide the outlet (and structures) needed to help with this choice. The life of these "survivors" is filled "with meanings and human associations that, over the course of a life, one experiences as genuine. The protean quest, however flawed, enhances that authenticity" (232). Though hegemonic at times, these structures can do more than just limit how we fragment ourselves; they can also give us permission (and a guide) to fragment and develop ourselves in an attempt to survive the trauma of materiality. We cannot do more than survive until we let go of the romantic notion of authenticity and accept our new dividual selves as authentic.

With Lifton's protean self, an individual fragments in order to survive a massive trauma (like war or religious rejection). This fragmentation is not seen as inauthentic for Lifton but as authentic. Today, our protean selves are now digital in nature and fragment into various digital parts in order to survive the "traumatic event of materiality"—in this case digital materiality—yet many see this digital fragmentation as a symptom of an inauthentic person. Since authenticity is often tied to sincerity (remember Trilling), inauthenticity is seen as insincere and therefore morally wrong and false. This false association between sincerity and authenticity is why we need to update the protean self for today's Net Generation since too many of us see this generation as inauthentic and, by proxy, immoral and insincere.

Social Network Sites as a Symptom of Digital Trauma

As mentioned earlier, our new protean selves fragment online to adapt to the trauma of a digital materialistic existence. On one hand the web gives us a forum to create and facilitate online identities—an endless creative outlet. For example, in the book *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*, author Jose van Dijck writes that Facebook can "offer individual users a stage for crafting a self-image and for popularizing this image beyond intimate circles" (51). In these social network sites, such as Facebook, "people want to *show* who they are; they have a vested interest in identity construction by sharing pieces of information because disclosing information about one's self is closely linked with popularity" (51). This belief system rooted in social network sites is based on the notion that "sharing is caring," a mantra repeated

many times in Eggers' book *The Circle*. The character of Mae states, "I think it's simple. If you care about your fellow human beings, you share what you know with them" (Eggers 302). The novel looks at what happens when we take such a mantra to the extreme, but the germ of the idea is present today.

With the inundation of digital media in our lives, and the trauma this inundation causes us, we reach out to social network sites as a place where we can attempt to rebuild our authentic selves. However, what we create is scattered and fragmented, which frustrates us because we are still holding onto the romantic notion of authenticity, and we fail to live up to that impossible standard.

The struggle to meet the romantic, authentic standards of the past forces us to see social network sites as a place with the power to create but also destroy individuality, a point made by Jaron Lanier in his book *You are Not a Gadget*. In this "manifesto," Lanier fears the Internet-created "hive mind" reduces individuality and that the fragments of our selves online threaten humanity. He worries that "the exercise of treating machine intelligence as real requires people to reduce their mooring to reality," but this assertion depends upon how one defines the concept of reality (Lanier 32). For Lanier, fragmenting the self is the opposite of what it means to be an individual; however, he fails to see how the fragmentation of identity is a defense mechanism in response to the trauma of digital materialism.

One reason why Lanier (and others) may not see digital technology as traumatic is because we are only looking at the symptoms of this trauma—not the trauma itself. These symptoms can be confusing because they often send mixed messages to users. A case in point is an examination of Facebook. In a recent article in *The New Yorker*, author Maria Konnikova discusses opposing arguments over Facebook regarding whether or not the social media outlet makes us "happy." Konnikova notes that on one hand "the Internet seemed to make [users] feel more alienated" while another study states that Facebook "increases social trust and engagement" ("How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy" 2). Konnikova goes on to say that how Facebook affects us depends primarily on how we use (or fail to use) the social network. If we approach Facebook in a passive way, then Facebook makes us feel inadequate and therefore unhappy. However, if we are engaged and manage to "step through the looking glass" as Turkle suggests, then Facebook can be a very rewarding experience. Either way, our approach to the social network depends upon our reaction to the trauma of digital media. In this light, "Facebook isn't the problem. It's the symptom" (Konnikova 3). The Internet becomes the battleground for our new scattered identity and whether or not we embrace this new authentic self is also hinged on whether or not we survive the trauma caused by flat ontology and loss of traditional notions of space and time associated with digital technology.

Catfish and Facebook: Questions of Identity

Our various online identities are examples of our attempts to survive the trauma of materiality and these identities also show that we are very reliant on the structures of social networks online as these structures keep us from falling into one of the problems of authentic identity as a process—constant transcendence with no clear boundaries. But these boundaries also question the ability of social networks to foster a truly authentic identity. However, this only becomes a question when we compare authentic identity to a romantic notion of authenticity. Our inability to let go of this outdated notion of authenticity makes it difficult for us to truly embrace the concept of a new kind of authenticity that is materialistic at the center. Kenneth Gergen discusses this problem in *The Saturated Self*:

> Many of our major problems in society result from taking seriously such terms as *reality, authenticity, true, worthwhile, superior, essential, valid, ideal, correct*, and the like. None of these otherwise awesome distinctions possesses transcendent foundations; they are all constructions of particular language communities, used for pragmatic purposes at a particular moment in history. Yet when these traditional shibboleths are put into serious practice, they begin to establish divisions, hierarchies, insidious separations, oppression, and indeed mass liquidation. Every "reality" makes a fool of those who do not participate. (189)

In a way, the romantic idea of authenticity is itself a boundary that we place on ourselves and our online identities that serves mostly to hinder us by making us feel "bad" or "fake" when others call out the "truth" of our online personas. What is not considered "authentic" in the romantic sense is, by default, inauthentic and pushed to the side.

We can see this "authentic-shaming" clearly in the 2010 film *Catfish*. In this film, filmmakers Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman follow Nev on his journey to uncover the "truth" about an online relationship he has with a young woman named Megan, the daughter of his Facebook friend Angela Wesselman. After many hours of flying, driving, and Google-based investigations, it is revealed that Angela created the Megan Facebook profile (as well as many other "fake" profiles) as a way to escape her "real" life as a stepmother to two cognitively disabled sons. Angela, who once aspired to be a painter, gave up this dream to care for the sons of her husband, Vince, in a small town in Upper Michigan.

Angela created these different profiles to give her connections outside of the home—even if those connections were themselves created by her. In an interview for *20/20* following the release of the film, Angela reasons that "It's not normal for just one person to be on Facebook…with just one friend. You have to have other friends" (Berman). Angela also notes that she is schizophrenic but that she does not "have multiple personalities in normal life, really" (Berman). Angela even tells us that her husband calls her a "manipulator" and she agrees with this assertion (Berman). It's unfortunate that Angela (as well as others) hide behind labels like "schizophrenic,"

"manipulator," and "normal" as these labels imply that what Angela did was not only "crazy" but morally wrong. She does not need to justify her actions (or play off of unnecessary mental illness judgments) as she was playing out the 21st century version of the new authentic self. Her actions are only "wrong" and "abnormal" when we compare her various identities against the romantic notion of the true authentic self.

Today, *Catfish* has spawned into a television show on MTV and continues to "authenticity shame" those who claim to be and/or look a certain way online that does not match how they are in "real" life. Only on rare occasions on the show are people actually who they say they are in their online profiles. Yet, regardless of whether or not an online identity matches a "real" identity the emotions involved are legitimate to those involved in these online affairs. The idea that the man you fell in love with online is physically a female raises too many questions and confusion for young users who would rather shame the person and their use of a "false" avatar than come to grips with the point that everything about our own identities, including sexual preferences, is blurry and fragmented. The internet—particularly Facebook—just gives us an outlet to embody these fragments under the illusion of individuality.

Anonymity as a Symptom

Another symptom of the trauma of digital technology is also rooted in the Internet, though not necessarily within social networks. The Internet offers something nearly impossible in "meat-space": anonymity. Anonymity offers us a chance to avoid

choosing an identity completely, almost like a third option once we have rejected the idea of both the romantic unitary self and the dividual self. This third option results in what John Suler calls "the online disinhibition effect." For Suler, there are two kinds of disinhibition: benign and toxic. Benign disinhibition occurs when people use the online world to open up emotionally and help others ("The Online Disinhibition Effect" 321). By opening up and revealing more about ourselves, benign disinhibition helps us to "better understand and develop oneself, to resolve interpersonal and intrapsychic problems or explore new emotional and experimental dimensions to one's identity" (321). With toxic disinhibition the freedom associated with the Internet results in cruel and rude behavior, such as cyber-bullying and visiting "the dark underworld of the Internet—places of pornography, crime, and violence" (321). Suler goes on to explain a few of the causes of the disinhibition effect, most notably dissociative anonymity:

> This anonymity is one of the principle factors that creates the disinhibition effect. When people have the opportunity to separate their actions online from their in-person lifestyle and identity, they feel less vulnerable about self-disclosing and acting out. Whatever they say or do cannot be directly linked to the rest of their lives. In a process of dissociation, they do not have to own their behavior by acknowledging it within the full context of an integrated online/offline identity. The online self becomes a compartmentalized self. ("The Online Disinhibition Effect" 322)

We can tie this "compartmentalized self" to another cause of disinhibition: dissociative imagination. Suler notes that "consciously or unconsciously, people may feel that the imaginary characters they 'created' exist in a different space, that one's online persona along with the online others live in an make-believe dimension, separate and apart from the demands and responsibilities of the real world" (323). Overall, then, "the disinhibition effect can then be understood as the person shifting, while online, to an intrapsychic constellation that may be, in varying degrees, dissociated from the in-person constellation, with inhibiting guilt, anxiety, and related affects as features of the in-person self but not as part of the online self" (325).

We dissociate our "meat-space" selves from our online selves, but all of these selves should be considered real and authentic. Each represents some facet of our identity and the Internet not only allows this compartmentalization to occur but rather encourages such a division. We identify ourselves through the digital technologies we use and these technologies identify with us, continuing the cycle. For example, let's look at Kenneth Burke's thoughts on identification:

> Once your grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is being presented in this form. Or it may even be an opponent's proposition which you resent—yet for the duration of the statement itself you might 'help him out' to the extent of yielding to the formal development, surrendering to its

symmetry as such…Thus, you are drawn to the form, not in your capacity as a

partisan, but because of some 'universal' appeal in it. (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 58)

We are drawn to a form that resembles our own, our new dividual self, and social

network sites like Facebook provide for the expression of that form. To claim our

various online identites are dissociated is a claim rooted in the belief that an authentic

identity must be a whole identity, not a claim based on the new authentic/protean self.

We need to see all of these identities as authentic selves instead of outliers of our

identities that need to be purged online. If we do not, then we make toxic behavior online

acceptable on some level because the person online is not really "us."

This toxic behavior tends to create an online troll that causes psychological

damage online that seeps into the human psyche offline. A troll, according to Lanier, is

"an anonymous person who is abusive in an online environment" (*You Are Not a Gadget*

60). The abuse is primarily textual and nondiscriminatory—anyone can be a victim of

online abuse at any moment for any reason.

A troll's vitriolic attack serves as a purge of sorts, an unleashing of an inner hate

on a relatively unknown person by another relatively unknown person. And while the

purge may be a release of sorts for the troll, the consequences can have traumatic

repercussions in both online and offline spaces. If trolls encourage other trolls to join in

on their random attacks, the consequences can be catastrophic as we end up "using digital

technology to harm innocent people who thought they were safe" (Lanier 65). These

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consequences usually take the form of cyberbullying that can have long-lasting psychological and physical effects on those afflicted—even lead to suicide by the afflicted.

According to National Crime Prevention Council's website, cyberbullying "happens when teens use the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person" and affects "almost half of America's teens" ("Cyberbulling FAQ"). One of the ways a person commits cyberbullying is to pretend to be someone else, using the shield of anonymity to negatively pressure and attack another person online. This anonymity can make it hard for those bullied to believe the bully can be disciplined, leaving the bullied person to silently suffer with no real hope of reprieve. Unfortunately, cyberbullying can lead to a lot of the same things as regular bullying, including the likelihood that a person use alcohol and drugs, skip school, and have lower self-esteem ("What is Cyberbullying?")

Ironically, a common response to the troll is to fragment our online identities; create a social profile on this site, create a professional one here, experiment with a new identity over on this site. We react to the symptom of anonymity of others by making ourselves less concrete online by experimenting with possible selves in an environment that offers a quick getaway route. Those who reject any online identity often force already dividual selves to splinter even more online than before. So even if we do not originally intend to divide ourselves online, trolls sometimes force us to make these actions.

Looking Back to Look Forward

Towards the end of *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman (a psychopath who wears several personality masks throughout the novel in order to survive the trauma of 1980's materialism) digresses on this period that brought with it a solipsism that lessened individual human value in favor of conformity:

> My pain is constant and sharp and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape. But even after admitting this—and I have, countless times, in just about every act I've committed—and coming face-to-face with these truths, there is no catharsis. I gain no deeper knowledge about myself, no new understanding can be extracted from my telling. There has been no reason for me to tell you any of this. This confession has meant *nothing*…(Ellis 377)

Today, the traumatic materialism is digital in nature, but the response remains the same. While his confession may seem foreboding and apocalyptic, it is how we may respond when we fail to live up to the romantic notion of an authentic self. This is the "dream of being a person" mentioned in the epigraph to this chapter. There is no "real me," no complete and tangible definition of the self that can be pinned down as authentic in the traditional sense.

But the pressure to adhere to this outdated concept only leaves us listless and angry, scattered and disgusted with our inability to glue these fragments of identity

together into a coherent whole—a "monster" at the end of the authenticity dream. But this monster can be reviewed and reclaimed by changing the authenticity narrative. This new authentic person could be "an absolute existential improvisation" and "a form born of the accident, by the accident, a kind of accident" (Malabou 2). Today, an authentic being is "a funny breed" and "a monster whose apparition cannot be explained as any genetic anomaly" (2).

If we are not meant to be whole, if the fragments are indeed the new authentic, the new protean, self, then there is no pressure and subsequent disappointment associated with failure at our inability to puzzle our identities together. There is also no elitist camp that can claim others as inauthentic as "the search for the authentic is a form of status competition" that is known far more by what it is not than by what it is (Potter 267).

We are traumatized by digital technology, as other major events and moments traumatized us in the past, and we respond to this trauma by fracturing our identities throughout the very places that traumatized us in an effort to adapt and thrive in this new context. As a result of the trauma associated with our relationships with digital devices, everything outside of the digital realm "does not seem 'real'" (McCarthy "Joint Statement" 232). We are not narcissists but are desperately trying to respond to this trauma the only way we know how. Now that I have traced this discourse through time in philosophical works and cultural moments, another voice (the voice of the author) needs to be examined for the discourse to come full circle.

CHAPTER III

AUTHENTIC APPLICATIONS TO FICTION

"We are things that labor under the illusion of having a self. A secretion of sensory

experience and feeling. Programmed with total assurance that we are each somebody,

when, in fact, nobody is anybody." Rust Cohle *True Detective*

A search for authenticity is one that many readers can relate to as something

desirable in their own lives—primarily because many of us still believe in the romantic

notion of authenticity and think we are inauthentic, and therefore morally corrupt as

authenticity is tied tightly to the concept of sincerity. However, since the 1980s, the

discourse of authenticity has shown how the idea of a romantic notion of authenticity as a

search that could end successfully has slowly changed into a search that ultimately

reveals the new (in)-authenticity of the 21st century. We can see the result of this search

when we read and write, which is why it's important to look at how literature enters the

discourse of authenticity.

In *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, author

Peter Barry introduces his readers to the ten tenets of liberal humanism which are meant

to serve as critical tools for fledging literary critics. The tenet that perhaps shows exactly

how much authenticity discourse affects the ways we write and the ways we read is tenet number five:

> Individuality is something securely possessed within each of us as our unique "essence." This transcends our environmental influences, and though individuality can change and develop (so do characters in the novels), it can't be transformed—hence our uneasiness with those scenes (quite common, for instance, in Dickens) which involve a "change of heart" in a character, so that the whole personality is shifted into a new dimension by force of circumstance—the miser is transformed and changes his ways, or the good man or woman becomes corrupted by wealth. *Such scenes imply a malleability in the essence of character which is at odds with this underlying assumption of English studies. The discipline as a whole believed in what is now called the "transcendent subject," which is the belief that the individual ("the subject") is antecedent to, or transcends, the forces of society, experience, and language*. (18 emphasis mine)

Reading this quote, it's interesting how the individual's ability to transcend her material existence is seen by many literary critics as more authentic than the ability to change an individual's essence. In today's technological ecosystem, it seems the latter has taken authentic priority in the philosophical and literary realms.

Some may question why the need to examine various kinds of literature to understand authenticity discourse. In *The War Diaries: November 1939-March 1940,* Sartre writes of his envy of Rimbaud and others "because they have managed to destroy themselves" and achieve authenticity (29). Rimbaud achieved authenticity "because he managed to give up even writing," something Sartre sees as the opposite of achieving authenticity, since when we write, we essentially write to another (29). Sartre's "recognition that he could no more stop writing than will himself to stop breathing is confirmation that he is, as it were, stalled in the mirror stage" (Lea 977). If what Sartre says is true, then how can we find authentic existence in literature and writing?

Simone de Beauvoir sees writing as *validating* our authentic existence by reminding us of how unique we truly are. For de Beauvoir, writing is a way to show how "each person's life has a unique flavor that, in a sense, no one else can know" and that "literature—if it is authentic—is a way of surpassing the separation by affirming it" ("What Can Literature Do?" 200). This explains why, when we all read the same piece of literature, we come away from it with different ideas and different thoughts. Literature becomes a way of communicating with each other, but a communication that still keeps the individual intact:

> I who am speaking to you am not in the same situation as you who are listening, and none of those who are listening to me is in the same situation as his neighbor. He did not come here with the same past, nor with the same intentions, nor the same culture. Everything is different. (Beauvoir "What Can Literature Do?" 199)

My feelings echo Beauvoir's, as well as Charles Taylor's when he states that "artistic expression becomes the paradigm mode in which people can come to self-definition" and that "the artist becomes in some way the paradigm case of the human being, as agent of original self-definition" (62). Literature can give us examples of how to live or how life was at a certain time and ultimately reveal what it means to be human at a certain place and time. Thus, literature becomes a "second level of inquiry" as "literature provide(s) and negotiate(s) cultural models of authenticity" (Mueller 30). In this light, literature (both fiction and nonfiction) is what Kenneth Burke has termed "equipment for living." For Burke, literature becomes "equipment for living" when it "singles out a pattern of experience that is sufficiently representative of our social structure, that recurs sufficiently often mutandis mutatis, for people to 'need a word for it' and to adopt an attitude towards it" (Burke "Literature" 300). Literature becomes a proverb and allows authors to experiment with new notions of authenticity in their work, thus giving their readers an authenticity paradigm that echoes much of the ideology of their respective time periods.

In *Post-Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Just-In-Time Captialism*, author Jeffrey T. Nealon questions the ability of literature to be "equipment for living" in today's materialistic and post-postmodern world. In the past, literature allowed us to "interrupt" our lives, slowing down everything to give us a reprieve or to reveal meaning in the meaningless. Today, however, language and literature need to shift "from a focus on *understanding* something to a concern with *manipulating* it—from (post-modern)

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meaning to (post-postmodern) *usage*" in order to keep Burke's philosophy relevant

(Nealon 148). Therefore, "…the 'equipmental'…force of literature at this historical

juncture may precisely lie in intensifying and expanding our sense of 'the poetic' as a

robust form of cultural engagement or analysis, whose force is enabled not by its distance

from dominant culture, but its imbrication with contemporary socioeconomic forces"

(Nealon 154). With this in mind, I will "no longer tend to go to the revelatory 'part' in

hopes of grasping the larger 'whole'" as past literary analyses tend to do but instead I will

"start with the larger, post-postmodern whole (e.g., globalization), to which any particular

part (say, postmodern literature) is a functioning piece"—in this case "globalization" is

swapped for "authenticity" (150). How does modern, post-modern, and post-postmodern

literature engage with the concept of the authentic self in contemporary culture? How

does literature "function" in this dialogue of the new authentic, technologically-rooted

self? In a way, literature in itself is inauthentic simply for being literature. After all, "the

'fake' interpretation of the virtual presents obvious affinities with the concept of fiction"

as fiction "describes not only the unreal character of the reference worlds created by

fiction but also…the logical status of fictional discourse itself" ("Virtuality" 627). In

spite of this inherent inauthenticity, literature can reveal some greater truth that we cannot

ignore. Current literature embraces this new authentic self and digital technological

narrative, encouraging readers to release the old romantic authentic self dream and

embrace their new multi-faceted digital persona. We can see how "language

simultaneously *reflects* context…and *constructs* it to be a certain way" by looking at how

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an authentic existence is portrayed in 20th century literature and how it is portrayed in late 20th and 21st century literature as these portrayals at once reflect and create what it means to be an authentic individual in different moments in history (Gee 101).

When I look at how modern fiction engages with the concept of the authentic self, I will look primarily at D.H. Lawrence and Walker Percy. Lawrence wrote during an important moment of identity crisis and his response to the trauma of industrialism was to react rather than transform the concept of identity. His reaction is rooted in his concept of the mixture of blood consciousness and mind consciousness that results in authentic existence, a different (yet somewhat similar) take on the Bakhtin's "surplus of vision." A "surplus of vision" happens when a reader first projects herself onto a character followed by "a *return* into myself, a *return* to my own place outside of the suffering person, for only from this place can the material derived from my projecting myself into the other can be rendered meaningfully ethically, cognitively, or aesthetically" ("Author and Hero" 26). For Lawrence, "no human being can develop save through the polarized connection with other beings" as "the actual evolution of the individual psyche is a result of the interaction between the individual and the outer universe" (Lawrence *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* 40-1). Blood consciousness is the more sensual side of identity, while mind consciousness represents the spiritual. Throughout his life, Lawrence attempted show this polarizing connection through his characters and his writings. A novel where we can really see this experimentation and conversation about authenticity at work is in *Women in Love* (which I discuss in detail later in this chapter).

In Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, published in 1961, Percy holds onto Taylor's concept of an authentic existence as a process of discovery rooted in morality and Bakhtin's "surplus of vision." If we look at novels as built upon relationships with others, this view makes *The Moviegoer* a reactive novel (like *Women in Love*) to the "traumatic event of materiality." But, unlike Lawrence's trauma of Industrialism, the trauma here is from feeling locked into one's materialistic existence to the point where one becomes too complacent and does not really live.

As the 20th century grew into the 21st century (and modernism grew into post-modernism), the advent of the internet had important implications for our notion of what it means to be a self, an individual (as mentioned in Chapter II). One novel that showcases these implications is Jeanette Winterson's *PowerBook*. Published at the turn of the 21st century, *PowerBook* is important because Winterson addresses the plasticity of the individual self in an online environment. With the internet's global reach and endless possibilities now, we no longer need to react to the "traumatic event of materiality" but can now transform ourselves as a response to that trauma. We have the power to take what we want from the trauma and fashion ourselves accordingly.

Twenty-first century fiction took the plasticity of self to the edge in a post-post-modernist light. Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* illustrates his important concept mentioned earlier and throughout this study of the "traumatic event of materiality" as the result of the ubiquitous internet. *Remainder* is a postmodern, hyper-realistic tale of an unnamed narrator's search for an authentic self after a horrific injury. The novel is also highly

ideological, using familiar ideas and desires on authenticity found through freedom to

reveal that the way to authenticity does not lie in traditional outlets (inner truth)—a fact

that McCarthy leaves up to the reader to discover on their own as *Remainder*'s nameless

narrator invites the reader along on a search for authenticity in a postmodern world that

inevitably (and figuratively) never ends. The transformation, then, becomes a destruction

of self in an attempt to create authenticity and links McCarthy to Sartre's belief that "to

create oneself and to kill oneself come to the same thing" (*Saint Genet* 167).

The conversation wraps up with a response to the idea that multiple identities, as a

result of Malabou's destructive plasticity, actually help us understand our new authentic

selves. We can see this response with an examination of Dave Egger's interpretation of a

Google-esque utopia with cult and violent implications in his novel *The Circle*.

Foucault and the "Author-Function"

In a way, an author of a literary work is already demonstrating the multitude of identities

that many of us "write" in our respective social networks. This "plurality of egos" is

what Foucault calls the "author-function":

> The 'author-function' is tied to the legal and institutional systems that
>
> circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate
>
> in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is
>
> not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a
>
> series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to

an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions the individuals of any class may come to occupy. ("What is an Author?" 130-31)

The "author-function" opens the door to a rejection of traditional authenticity questions in favor of more complex questions, such as "'What are the modes of existence of this discourse?'" and, perhaps, "'What matter who's speaking?'" (Foucault "What is an Author" 138). Even though many of us may not have ever written a book, we have written various personalities. While the "author-function" is embraced in the literary canon, it is often rejected in other forms of "authorship."

Reactive Identity: D.H. Lawrence and Love Relationships as Source of Reactive Authentic Identity

"We are materialistic because we haven't the power to be anything else—try as we may, we can't bring off anything but materialism; mechanism, the very soul of materialism." Rupert Birkin *Women in Love*

Charles Taylor notes that "we are all aware how our identity can be formed or malformed in our contact with significant others" and that, as a result of this realization, "love relationships…are crucial because they are crucibles of inwardly generated identity" (*Ethics of Authenticity* 49). Perhaps no modern author believed in this important tie between self-knowledge and romantic relationships than D.H. Lawrence. In *Women in Love*, the main characters struggle to find an identity that is at once

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independent of and dependent upon a significant other (male or female). At the beginning of the novel, sisters Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen discuss the concept of marriage with Ursula stating that such a union was "likely to be the end of experience" rather than "an experience of some sort" as the latter thinks (Lawrence 5). Yet, in spite of her older sister's dismissal of marriage as an important experience, Gudrun sees Gerald Crich for the first time and immediately feels some sort of connection with him:

> A strange transport took possession of her, all her veins were in a paroxysm of violent sensation. 'Good God!' she exclaimed to herself, 'what is this?' And then, a moment after, she was saying assuredly, 'I shall know more of that man.' She was tortured with desire to see him again, a nostalgia, a necessity to see him again, to make sure it was not all a mistake, that she was not deluding herself, that she really felt this strange overwhelming sensation on his account, this knowledge of him in her essence, this powerful apprehension of him. (13)

This "nostalgia" upon seeing him hearkens back to Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* and his concept of the immortal soul recognizing beauty on the earth as a reminder of the true beauty and reality of the gods. Lawrence seems to be advocating this concept of absolute truth and beauty tied to Plato, though the authentic self for Lawrence can be reached in our human bodies through not just inner contemplation (the only way Plato believed transcendence could be reached) but also through a sensual connection with another human being.

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Hermoine, Ursula's rival for Rupert Birkin's affection, is also aware of something

missing when she thinks of Birkin:

> She always felt vulnerable, vulnerable, there was always a secret chink in her
>
> armour. She did not know herself what it was. It was a lack of robust self, she
>
> had no natural sufficiency, there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being
>
> within her…she craved for Rupert Birkin. When he was there, she felt complete,
>
> she was sufficient, whole. (Lawrence 15)

Ursula's feelings for Birkin echo Hermoine's, though her own reaction is decidedly less

romantic than Hermoine's: "He piqued her, attracted her, and annoyed her. She wanted

to know him more…she thought he seemed to acknowledge some kinship between her

and him, a natural, tacit understanding, a using of the same language" (Lawrence 19).

It's important to note here that while Hermoine sees herself complete when she is

with Birkin, the same is not so for Ursula, making the latter a much better mate for him as

he desires a relationship that leaves both parties individually intact. He explains to both

Hermoine and Ursula that he wants sensuality "and nothing else," adding that "it is a

fulfillment—the great dark knowledge you can't have in your head—the dark involuntary

being. It is death to one self—but it is the coming into being of another" (Lawrence 42).

The reason he only wants sensuality is because he wants to remain independent

consciously. For Lawrence, there is a separation between mental consciousness and

"blood consciousness"; they must be connected in order to achieve transcendence, this

"coming into being of another" that Birkin talks about. It is difficult for us to achieve "blood consciousness" because we are too aware mentally of ourselves and our actions to really let go of control. As Birkin says, "In our night time, there's always the electricity switched on, we watch ourselves, we get it all in the head…you've got to lapse out before you can know what sensual reality is, lapse into unknowingness, and give up your volition…you've got to learn not-to-be, before you can come into being" (43).

Our inability to let go of control is also tied to the "electricity" Birkin mentions above. In a conversation with Gerald, the latter reveals that he believes there is no center to life and instead life "is artificially held together by the social mechanism" (Lawrence 57). His statement takes us to Andrew Potter's comment about the self as an onion with many layers and no authentic center mentioned earlier in Chapter One. We peel back these layers in an attempt to unearth a true, inner core that is free from materialism only to find our center is "artificially held together by the social mechanism." Later on, Gerald reiterates this train of thought, claiming that "only work, the business of production, held men together" because "society *was* a mechanism" (Lawrence 105 emphasis in original). When the work day is done, however, Gerald feels that men "were isolated, free to do as they liked" (105). For Birkin, though, there is an authentic center to life and it is "this perfect union with a woman—sort of ultimate marriage—and there isn't anything else," especially since he believes that God does not exist (57). When he approaches Ursula regarding a possible relationship, he makes it clear he wants a primal connection with her, purely sexual, believing that this is the way each can reach that dark blood

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consciousness. He tells her, "I want to find you, where you don't know your own existence, the you that your common self denies" (151).

This "blood consciousness" is best described when Ursula embraces Birkin after recovering from a particularly nasty fight:

> Unconsciously, with her sensitive finger-tips, she was tracing the back of his thighs, following some mysterious life-flow there. She had discovered something, something more than wonderful, more wonderful than life itself. It was the strange mystery of his life-motion, there, at the back of the thighs, down the flanks. It was a strange reality of his being, the very stuff of being, there in the straight downflow of the thighs. It was here she discovered him one of the sons of God such as were in the beginning of the world, not a man, something other, something more. (325)

Birkin's friendship with Gerald adds another dimension to Lawrence's reactive concept of being, adding a male relationship into the mix. Lawrence illustrates the blending of blood and mind consciousness in the relationship forged between Birkin and Gerald. While some critics see this relationship as homosexual, critic James C. Cowan argues that Lawrence adapts "the concept of *Blutsbrüderschaft*" in order "to establish a 'nourishing creative flow' between the self and the other" (37). Blutsbrüderschaft is a kind of blood brotherhood that seeks to establish "a complementary, irrevocably bonded, male-male relationship…to counterbalance [a] male-female relationship" (Cowan 37). To be

authentic, for Lawrence, meant cultivating meaningful and emotional relationships with men *and* women.

Also, a relationship with another male helps to keep Birkin individually free from Ursula, a separate entity in a monogamous relationship. Birkin dislikes the concept of "the world all in couples, each couple in its own little house…it's the most repulsive thing on earth" (366). For him, "a permanent relation between a man and a woman isn't the last word" and, to "take down the love-and-marriage ideal from its pedestal," Birkin "believe(s) in the *additional* perfect relationship between man and man—additional to marriage" (366 emphasis in original). Only then can one have "such a gladness of having surpassed oneself, of having transcended the old existence" of inauthenticity into a new authentic existence (384).

To illustrate this point, the couple who chooses to lose each other in their mutual passion (Gerald and Gudrun) are literally and emotionally destroyed while the couple that lives out his and hers own recipe for an ideal authentic existence (Birkin and Ursula) find stability and comfort with (and outside of) each other. *Woman in Love* beautifully illustrates what Lawrence believed was the ultimate path to authentic existence in a materialistic world—a blending of the blood and mind consciousness through relationships with both sexes. The one couple who managed to achieve this delicate blending survives and thrives, while the other couple suffers and ultimately dies emotionally and physically.

Reactive Authentic Discovery through Trauma in the Novel

In Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer,* Binx Bolling sees the authentic self not as a
created self but one found by searching between the threads of inner and outer
consciousness, a search that may very well end in disillusionment. Thus, Binx represents
one of "Percy's protagonists [who] move from the realm of everydayness into a search for
self that brings them first to a recognition of the defects in the cult of technology, then to
the awareness of shallowness in their own lives" ("Walker Percy"). Binx is aware of this
"shallowness," and it sparks a search for identity and meaning in his life:

> What is the nature of the search? You ask. Really it is very simple, at least for a
> fellow like me; so simple that it is easily overlooked. The search is what anyone
> would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life…To
> become aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. Not to be
> onto something is to be in despair. (Percy 13)

To search implies that there is something out there that can be found only if we look for
it. True authentic existence, then, can be found and not created in *The Moviegoer.* Binx
states that "the movies are onto the search, but they screw it up" as "the search always
ends in despair" (Percy 13). The idea that movies are somehow more in touch with an
authentic identity is also one that is touched upon in McCarthy's *Remainder*, as will be
discussed later on. For Binx, movie-going helps to make a place more real, a process he
calls "certification" (63). This "certification" process is complete only when you watch a

movie that shows your neighborhood, a moment that makes it "possible for him to live, for a time at least, as a person who is Somewhere and not Anywhere" (63).

A place is not authentic for Binx until that place appears in movies. The concept of certification as a prerequisite for authentic identity is also mentioned earlier in the novel by Binx: "My wallet is full of identity cards, library cards, credit cards. Last year I purchased a flat olive-drab strongbox, very smooth and heavily built with double walls for fire protection, in which I placed my birth certificate, college diploma, honorable discharge, G.I. insurance, a few stock certificates, and my inheritance…It is a pleasure to carry out the duties of a citizen and to receive in return a receipt or a neat styrene card with one's name on it *certifying*, so to speak, one's right to exist" (6-7 emphasis mine). But, regardless of these certifications around him, Binx is still on a search for authentic identity, showing readers that identity is not truly acquired by pieces of identification papers or movie certification. More must be done for Binx in order to establish an authentic existence—one must be open to the idea of the search and one way to be open to it is through malaise and/or a kind of trauma.

True reality is associated with malaise and trauma for Percy as these are the events that will shake a person out of their complacency of a false identity brought upon by materialism and technologies. The malaise, according the Binx, "is the pain of loss. The world is lost to you, the world and the people in it, and there remains only you and the world and you no more able to be in the world than Banquo's ghost" (Percy 120). According to critic Thomas Nagel, "*The Moviegoer* remains Percy's purest and most

exact description of that malady of extreme detachment from perception and action which allows the victim to make contact with reality only when he is first dislodged, with greater or less violence, from his accustomed perch" ("Sin and Significance"). Binx's cousin Kate feels people are real "only in time of illness or disaster or death" while Binx notes that most people are dead and "all the friendly and likable people seem dead…only the haters seem alive" (Percy 83 and 100). The greatest enemy to authenticity for Binx is everydayness that can only be broken by disaster (145). His own everydayness was broken during the war when he regained consciousness after he was shot in the shoulder. It was in the aftermath of this trauma that he thinks of the search for the first time (10-11). This is perhaps why he believes that "the best times are for [him] the worst times, and that worst of times was one of the best" (10). Binx laments that

> in the thirty-first year of my dark pilgrimage on this earth and knowing less than I ever knew before, having learned only to recognize merde when I see it…one hundred percent of people are humanists and ninety-eight percent believe in God, and men are dead, dead, dead; and the malaise has settled like a fall-out and what people really fear is not that the bomb will fall but that the bomb will not fall— on this my thirtieth birthday, I know nothing and there is nothing to do but fall prey to desire. Nothing remains but desire. (Percy 228)

The search continues for Binx as the novel concludes with him realizing all he can do is to observe others to find authentic existence: "There is only one thing I can do: listen to people, see how they stick themselves into the world, hand them along a ways in their

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dark journey and be handed along, and for good and selfish reasons" (233). Binx at once continues his belief in the search for identity ("dark pilgrimage") while acknowledging the importance of connecting with others during this journey in order to solidify an identity since identity, for Binx, needs acknowledgement from outsiders. It is in these moments that Binx realizes that authentic existence is not just a search for a true identity but also acknowledges that a true identity is built from relationships with others, just as Taylor believes.

Transform Identity: Self-Fashioning/Transformation and the Early Internet with Jeanette Winterson

"*A man lives so many different lengths of time*. A man *is* so many different lengths of time. Change. Collapse. Reinvention." Steven Hall *The Raw Shark Texts.*

In 2000, Jeanette Winterson published *The PowerBook*, an experimental novel that examines our relationships with language and each other in a world touched by the internet. This novel is an example of the choice to transform the crisis of self in the postmodern/posthuman world as opposed to simply reacting to this crisis. The novel presents "the virtual space of email communication," a decision by Winterson that "offers the ideal territory for abandoning [reality]" (Kauer 97). At the beginning of the novel, the narrator begins to blur the line between reality and digital reality as she coaxes readers to do the same:

> This is where the story starts. Here, in these long lines of laptop DNA. Here we
> take your chromosomes, twenty-three pairs, and alter your height, eyes, teeth, sex.

> This is an invented world. You can be free just for one night…I can change the story. I am the story. (Winterson 4-5)

We are told from an early age how unique we are due to our specific DNA. Yet, as Winterson infers in this passage, the age of the internet allows us to change what we once thought impossible to change—our DNA. Granted, this is not a physical change in DNA that takes place in what she calls "meatspace" but rather an emotional and spiritual DNA flip that is just as real and convincing in cyberspace as it could be in meatspace. The world is at once invented and authentic in cyberspace because we are the story, and we are the author as we can change this story with a few clicks of a keyboard. There is a lot of freedom in this ability to alter not only how others perceive us but also how we perceive ourselves. In a sense, we are like the narrator who states, "I live in one world—material, seeming-solid—and the weight of that world is quite enough. The other worlds I can reach need to keep their lightness and their speed of light. What I carry back from those worlds to my world is another chance" (640). Thus, "the text presents itself as a construction kit: choose your character, choose a setting, and make your own story" (Kauer 95). The stories told through email in this novel are also "linked by an intertextual system of references, which might be seen as a parody of a hypertext system" (Kauer 95). While some may feel that meatspace is the authentic identity, believing our cyber identity as a mask that disguises what is real, Winterson asks, "But what if my body is the disguise? What if skin, bone, liver, veins, are the things I use to hide of myself? I have put them on and can't take them off. Does that trap me or free me?" (16-

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17). Because of this blurriness between what is real and what is not real, and even what those terms actually mean, it is difficult to discern that which is real and that which is fashioned when it comes to an identity on and off-line. As the narrator notes, "It used to be that the real and the invented were parallel lines that never met. Then we discovered that space is curved, and in curved space parallel lines always meet" (108). Therefore, it is not surprising that the invented self formed through cyberspace has usurped the once "authentic" self of meatspace as the prominence of digital technologies has permeated every facet of our existence today. It's interesting to note how Winterson predicted this blending of the real and the invented over thirteen years ago when the internet was young.

The Twenty-First Century Novel

"We are now living through a historical period in which the meaning of the human is radically uncertain—as uncertain, perhaps, as it has ever been." Peter Boxall

As the 21st century emerged, literary fiction spoke to the changing, technological times and authenticity theories, continuing this discourse of authenticity thousands of years in the making. According to Peter Boxall, twenty-first century fiction, like the century before it, tries to adapt and understand notions of humanity, time, and space in a constantly digital world. Thus, "our own navigational and orientational apparatuses are calibrated by a shockingly new era in the technological manipulation of time, space, and distance, and by a specifically twenty-first-century speed" (Boxall 3). No longer

impressed by cars and telephones, our generation sees "our own time is bent and crafted

by the computer, the mobile phone, the satellite, the internet; by electronic

communication at the speed of light" (3-4). Because of these monumental changes, "the

mechanics of narrative itself…have undergone a transformation" (4). It is "this sense of

a profound disjunction between our real, material environments and the new

technological, political and aesthetic forms in which are global relations are being

conducted that lies at the heart of the developments in the twenty-first century novel" (9).

Twenty-first century fiction speaks to these changes, attempting to answer questions of

time, space, and human individuality in a world that may not have a place for any of

these once important attributes of life.

Self-Fashioning and "Pessimistic" Reaction through Trauma

As mentioned earlier, Tom McCarthy is the General Secretary of the International

Necronautical Society who helped write the "Joint Statement on Inauthenticity" in 2007,

a manifesto that advocates that we are inauthentic at our core due to the "traumatic event

of materiality." Thus, according to the two responses for the postmodern self mentioned

above, McCarthy and his philosophical group are reactive "pessimists." *Remainder* was

published in 2005, before the presentation of the "Joint Statement on Inauthenticity," yet

many of the ideas penned in the latter echo those of the former novel. The conversation

of authenticity and inauthenticity that began in *Remainder* is put into precise language in

the manifesto, which is why I will spend a substantial amount of time discussing this

important novel.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard writes extensively on his concept of the simulacra, a simulation that "[substitutes] the signs of the real for the real" and "never again will the real have the chance to produce itself" (2). A simulacra, then, "has no relation to reality whatsoever—it is its own simulacra" (6). The simulacrums found in *Remainder* are created by the narrator attempting a "panic-stricken production of the real and of the referential, parallel to and greater than the panic of material production" (7). The narrator is nostalgic for a moment of authenticity and attempts to recreate the space that sparked this feeling of realness, inadvertently using simulacrums that deny reality as the catalyst to recreate a very real and desirable feeling.

Baudillard's "remainder" concept is also pertinent to a discussion on this novel under the same name. Baudrillard writes that "when everything is taken away, nothing is left. This is false" (143). It is "false" because there is always something left: the remainder. He goes on to say that "this remainder never has an autonomous reality, nor its own place…it cannot be defined except as the remainder of the remainder" (143). This indefinable term is difficult to pin down, as "one never knows which is the remainder of the other" (143). But "all of the real is residual, and everything that is residual is destined to repeat itself indefinitely in phantasms" until the real is somehow resolved (146). If all of life is a remainder, and thus void of meaning, then it is impossible to try to find meaning in life. Baudrillard blames the masses for the lack of meaning and that "there is no more hope for meaning…meaning is mortal" (164).

In McCarthy's *Remainder*, the narrator is at an existential crossroads after a brutal accident when something falls on him from the sky. As a result of this accident, the narrator receives a big "Settlement" in return for keeping the incident quiet (incidentally he cannot remember anything about it). The narrator learns how to walk and move again, bringing to his mind how forced and fake these movements felt. When the narrator first learned how to walk as a child, the memories of these movements and how they were achieved were forgotten—something true for most of us. After time, these movements seem natural and authentic. It is only when these movements were taken away from the narrator that the mechanization of human movement is truly understood. This realization brings feelings of inauthenticity and neutrality in the protagonist—as well as nostalgia to overcome these feelings.

The violence and details of the accident at the beginning of the novel are vague for a reason—McCarthy does not want us to dwell too much upon traumatic theory and its effects upon the narrator but instead focus on the narrator's search for authenticity as this search is one many of us can join full heartedly. Also, this trauma is vague because McCarthy compares the trauma to the "traumatic event of materiality"—he invites us to imagine what we think happened. This invitation allows McCarthy to put the reader in a position to fully participate in the novel. The narrator's trauma is our own, after all, as the narrator's "attempts to transcend this sense of inauthenticity…is less the consequence of his accident than a condition of being itself" (Hart "An Interview" 661). This concept of participation can be tied to Burke's identification rhetoric as "many purely formal

patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 58). Burke argues that "once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter" which can lead the reader to accept certain notions in the novel simply because the structure appeals to them and invites them to participate (58).

Some critics of *Remainder* tend to see the novel in a purely traumatic light, noting that the novel "challenges this tradition's reliance on psychological realism and feeling, and it does so by taking on what it sees as the most recent instance of that tradition: the novel is an attempt to debunk the customary pieties of trauma fiction" (Vermeulen 550). I agree with Vermeulen that the novel does set up expectations associated with trauma and fails to meet those expectations—those familiar with trauma and its psychological affects will interpret many scenes in the novel as evidence of the narrator's trauma (such as his tendency to "check out" of reality for small spaces of time).

Remainder is more than just a postmodern existentialist novel but also what Kenneth Burke has termed "equipment for living. Thus, the book is a proverb for the reader as it gives the reader not only a possible blueprint for postmodern authenticity, but also a warning regarding this desire for authenticity and what can be lost of our humanity in the search for a momentary feeling of wholeness. With each re-enactment, the narrator becomes more and more violent as he believes the only way to achieve true authenticity is through a violent act. Death is the ultimate cohesion between the inner and outer world—but how to die without actually dying and achieve authenticity?

This is something the narrator believes he can figure out through his re-enactments. But first the re-enactments begin simply enough with the desire to walk and move again.

The narrator's feelings of inauthenticity are exacerbated by watching movies, ironically an art form that prides itself on the ability to appear real even though it is not. This ties into *The Moviegoer* and Binx's fascination with the silver screen. However, Binx focuses more on how a film makes a place more genuine while the unnamed narrator of *Remainder* is more interested in the human element of movies. While watching Robert De Niro on screen, he sees that actors in film are "just doing their thing, real, not thinking anything" (McCarthy 25). The narrator is envious of this mindset, noting that "recovering from the accident, learning to move and walk, understanding before I could act—all this just made me become even more what I'd always been anyway, added another layer of distance between me and the things I did" (25).

This changes when a crack in a bathroom wall reminds the narrator of a time and place where the narrator felt most real:

> Most of all I remembered this: that inside this remembered building, in the rooms on the staircase, in the lobby and the large courtyard between it and the building facing with the red roofs with black cats on them—that in these spaces, all my movements had been fluent and unforced. Not awkward, acquired, second-hand, but natural. Opening my fridge's door, lighting a cigarette, even lifting a carrot to my mouth: these gestures had been seamless, perfect. I'd merged with them, run

through them and let them run through me until there'd been no space between us. They'd been *real*; I'd been real—*been* without first understanding how to try to be: cut out the detour. I remembered this with all the force of an epiphany, a revelation. Right then I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my money. I wanted to reconstruct that space and enter it so that I could feel real again. I wanted to; I had to; I would. Nothing else mattered. (McCarthy 67)

With a formidable sum at the protagonist's disposal, recreating this space is definitely a possibility—especially through a company called "Time Control UK." Naz, a Time Control UK employee, helps the narrator use the settlement to buy buildings, choose stage directors, and hire human "actors" to recreate everything the narrator remembers about this place to the tiniest detail. What may appear odd to the reader is that no one seems to question the narrator's right to hire all of this manpower and resources simply to recreate one particular moment. The narrator has the money—the narrator has the power and is of the economic elite. All that matters, then, is the self-interests of the narrator. He sees his power at this point in purely hegemonic terms, believing that if he recreates a specific structure and gives each re-enactor a specific role to play then this is all the power he needs to exert to create his own authentic moment.

While planning this re-enactment, the narrator thinks about a shoot-out that occurred near his place before the accident, noting that walking by the area after the event it seems as if nothing happened. Yet, "everything must leave some kind of mark" (10). This would be the remainder. The narrator feels that true authenticity will not leave a

mark, a remainder, if the material and immaterial forces that are in constant tension within us find some kind of cohesive peace which will allow the natural, authentic self to transcend the material self. This, then, is the argument for true authenticity. In order to achieve this state, the narrator feels that a reenactment must first be as perfect as once remembered. When that perfectness is obtained, the narrator feels a moment of transcendence that is thought to be the exact moment when authenticity is achieved. This feeling is described by the narrator as a "sense of gliding, of light density" as he "seemed to expand and become a pool—a still, clear pool that swallowed everything up in its calm contentedness" (McCarthy 147). When the narrator flips the "on" switch at his re-enactment flat, a moment with the liver lady switches on this feeling of "contentedness" that spurs the narrator to demand that the two actors re-enact that same moment a few more times to keep this feeling alive. This works—but not for long.

The moment breaks when something inside the liver lady's trash bag breaks and the narrator, frustrated at this loss of authenticity, moves on with the re-enactment. When meeting up with another re-enactor, the motorcycle enthusiast, the narrator notes that beneath the bike he is working on, the re-enactor has left an oil patch. Intrigued, the narrator asks that the motorcycle enthusiast leave the oil patch and not clean it up, stating a desire to "capture it" (McCarthy151). The motorcycle enthusiast questions this idea but this annoys the narrator, who thinks that to capture it "meant whatever I wanted it to mean: I was paying him to do what I said. Prick" (151). The narrator's self-interests are all that matter and no explanations are needed for any decisions made by the narrator.

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This search for authenticity does not need to be explained to those without influence or power—they will not be able to achieve it. McCarthy shows the reader what happens when one has no real limits or boundaries when searching for authenticity. When Naz asks the narrator if the re-enactment was a success, the narrator replies, "It was a beginning" (152).

This first re-enactment slowly deteriorates, leaving too much behind and successfully destroys any hope of true authenticity in the narrator. The liver fat accumulated over hours of frying clogs up the extraction fans and the black cats on the opposite roof have to be replaced weekly as they tend to fall off the roof to their death. On a chance meeting with the hired pianist, the narrator discovers the pianist's betrayal of recording himself playing the piano instead of actually playing the tune in real-time, when the building was "on," thus showing the narrator that the re-enactment is not a success—is not reality. The entire reenactment is a remainder, just as Baudrillard stated above. Disappointed in this false epiphany, the narrator further separates himself from this original re-enactment, asking for a model of the flat and the re-enactors (thus replacing the simulacrum with another simulacrum) and then forces the re-enactors to do different things. This disillusionment over the faulty re-enactment hits the narrator hard and interest in this first re-enactment slowly dies out. Leaving his flat for the first time in weeks, the narrator finds hope for authenticity once again at a tire shop near the narrator's old home.

After the young boys fixed the narrator's flat tire, the narrator asks that the boys refill the car's windshield wiper fluid. When the narrator tries to dispense the fluid, nothing comes out. When he determines that the fluid did not leak out, the boys continue to pour more and more windshield wiper fluid into the car but to no avail—nothing comes out when the narrator presses the dispenser button. In awe, the narrator thinks:

> they'd vaporized, evaporated. And do you know what? It felt wonderful. Don't
> ask me why: it just did. It was as thought I'd just witnessed a miracle: matter—
> these two litres of liquid—becoming un-matter—not surplus matter, mess or
> clutter, but pure, bodiless blueness. Transubstantiated. I looked up at the sky: it
> was blue and endless. (171)

Here, perhaps, is a moment of true reality when everything comes together perfectly without a single drop of remainder. It's important to note the narrator's choice of the word "transubstantiated" as this is typically a word rooted in theology. In Christian theology, transubstantiation occurs when the bread and wine taken during sacrament literally becomes the body and blood of Christ—basically a miracle of pure transcendence. The appearance of the bread and wine is the same—but the essence changes into something far more potent and powerful. Retaining its blueness (thus linking the fluid to the color of the sky at that moment), the fluid changes within to be something else. Has a moment of authenticity occurred? Not quite. When the narrator turns on the air-conditioning, the remainder spills out of the vents and covers him in blue, sticky liquid.

The narrator reflects on this disappointing moment:

> It was something very sad—not in the normal sense but on a grander scale, the scale that really big events are measured in, like centuries of history or the death of stars: very, very sad. A miracle seemed to have taken place, a miracle of transubstantiation—in contravention of the very laws of physics, laws that make swings stop swinging and fridge doors catch and large, unsuspended objects fall out of the sky. This miracle, this triumph over matter, seemed to have occurred, then turned out not to have done at all—to have failed utterly, spectacularly, its watery debris crashing down to earth, turning the scene of a triumphant launch into the scene of a disaster, a catastrophe. Yes, it was very sad. (174)

Why does the narrator want so badly for this "miracle" to occur? Why is the narrator so devastated when it does not happen? It's interesting how the narrator harkens back to the past, noting the history of earth and, perhaps, remembering a time when things happened naturally without meaning or name—they just happened and it was enough. If something happened that could prove these "laws" wrong, then perhaps a sense of authenticity and realness could truly be possible for the narrator. The fact that there was a remainder (the windshield wiper fluid) means that the experience was not "authentic" as "the subsequent revelation of the fault in the vehicle's plumbing system repudiates this miracle and throws the narrator back into the state of rational physics the he associates with inauthenticity" (Lea 466). The narrator wants reality without a remainder—a type of reality that transcends itself so purely that nothing remains but the feeling of authenticity.

As Lea points out, "for McCarthy's unnamed narrator, authenticity can only be experienced as intangibility, the fleeting apperception of a transcendent core not just to selfhood, but also to life itself" (464).

The re-enactment of the tire shop is far more elaborate than the re-enactment of the old flat as it requires the hiring of young boys and needs to be run constantly to serve the narrator's purpose. When everything is set, the narrator watches the scene unfold from a platform up above everything and everyone—the ultimate panopticon. Even when the narrator physically leaves, the re-enactments must continue indefinitely, relying on hegemonic structures to keep the re-enactors dutifully following their lines and actions as the narrator dictates on a continuous loop. Once everything goes without hitch for two weeks, the narrator changes the re-enactment in an effort to create what did not happen—the blue washer fluid disappearing. Now the narrator wants to self-fashion the transcendence.

Since the complete transcendence of reality does not happen when the narrator experiences the moment in real time, then perhaps with some changes a miracle of authenticity could occur. His employees, so eager to help in any way as long as they receive a paycheck, are struck dumb at this request, claiming that for the liquid to simply disappear would be "impossible" (McCarthy 181). Even with an exorbitant amount of money and power, the narrator cannot fully discount the material world in order to transcend the remainder and create a moment of true authentic existence.

The narrator gets more and more impatient with the inability of money and the power and recognition that comes with it to recreate a re-enactment that transcends what happened in real time. This impatience leads the narrator to attempt yet another re-enactment that is far more dramatic and violent: a shoot-out that left a man dead. What makes this turn to violence interesting is that Baudrillard notes, "terrorism is always that of the real" (*Simulacra* 47). The narrator associates authenticity with its opposite, death, in an attempt to shake out the real in a world of simulations. By simulating a deadly shoot-out, the narrator hopes to mimic the death so perfectly that the narrator is reborn into a more authentic self. This is why in the re-enactment of the shoot-out the narrator demands to play the part of the victim:

> Why was I so obsessed with the death of this man I'd never met? I didn't stop to ask myself. I knew we had things in common, of course. He'd been hit by something, hurt, laid prostrate and lost consciousness; so had I. We'd both slipped into a place of total blackness, silence, nothing, without memory and without anticipation, a place unreached by stimuli of any kind…The truth is that, for me, this man had become a symbol of perfection…in dying beside the bollards on the tarmac he'd done what I wanted to do: merged with the space around him, sunk and flowed into it until there was no distance between it and him—and merged, too, with his actions, merged to the extent of having no more consciousness of them. He'd stopped being separate, removed, imperfect. (McCarthy 197-98)

It is perhaps here that the reader gets a sense of the narrator's death drive taking the

wheel. The narrator realizes that the path to authenticity lies not in becoming a separate

and whole being through transcendence, but rather through a merging with the

inauthentic and materialistic world around him—effectively becoming inauthentic at the

core. This is the new, posthuman authenticity. When questioned by a friend about his

motives for so many reenactments, the narrator explains that each reenactment "had the

same goal, their only goal: to allow me to be fluent, natural, to merge with actions and

with objects until there was nothing separating us—and nothing separating me from the

experience that I was having: no understanding, no learning first and emulating

secondhand, no self-reflection, nothing: no detour" (McCarthy 240). It is then that the

narrator realizes the last time he truly felt real was not inside that flat years ago but

outside of Victoria Station "demanding money" in the guise of a beggar (242). Then

something clicks; since "everything must leave some kind of mark," what remains after

this mergence between self and materialistic existence would be the authentic self. And

the catalyst for this authenticity would be the violence and death of a simulated, but real,

bank robbery—the ultimate example of a demand for money. As some critics have

pointed out, the bank robbery re-enactment is too similar to Baudillard's comments on

bank robberies and simulacrum to be ignored. According to Baudrillard:

> …it would be interesting to see whether the repressive apparatus would not react
>
> more violently to a simulated holdup than to a real holdup. Because the latter
>
> does nothing but disturb the order of things, the right to property, whereas the

former attacks the reality principle itself. Transgression and violence are less

serious because they only contest the *distribution* of the real. Simulation is

infinitely more dangerous because it always leaves open to supposition that,

above and beyond its object, *law and order themselves might be nothing but*

simulation. (*Simulacra* 20 emphasis in original)

Baudrillard even gives instructions for a fake holdup:

Verify that your weapons are harmless, and take the most trustworthy hostage, so

that no human life will be in danger (or one lapses into the criminal). Demand a

ransom, and make it so that the operation creates as much commotion as

possible—in short, remain close to the 'truth,' in order to test the reaction of the

apparatus to a perfect simulacrum. You won't be able to do it: the network of

artificial signs will become inextricably mixed up with real elements…in short,

you will immediately find yourself once again, without wishing it, in the real. (20)

Our narrator does not want to remain in the simulated bank holdup—he wants the

violence and the death in order to transcend into a new version of authenticity. When he

practices the holdup with his actors, he realizes that what needs to be done to make the

mergence between the material and immaterial complete is to place the latter into the

realm of the former—to place the simulated bank holdup within an actual bank with

"real" people. The only ones who would think the heist is a simulation would be the

actors hired to be bank robbers. The narrator would know, and he would make sure their

weapons were real and loaded to ensure some level of violence needed to "*accede to*—a kind of authenticity through this strange, pointless residual" (McCarthy 259).

The simulated heist in a real environment begins smoothly enough—until the actors realize that the people in the bank are not hired actors like them after one of their own trips up over a "ghost kink" in the carpet. The actor's need to feel this kink, this remainder, trips him up and he crashes into the other "robbers" in front of him. In all the commotion, an actor is shot to death. The narrator watches blood flower from the chest of the dead actor onto the carpet, and sees the blending of blood with carpet as "beautiful" (McCarthy 291). The narrator tries to explain later what he meant: "But it was a re-enactment. That's the beauty of it. It became real while it was going on" (296).

The constant repetition and reenactments in the novel solidify McCarthy's main theme in many of his novels: "the experience of failed transcendence" since "being is not full transcendence…but rather an ellipsis, an absence" ("Joint Statement" 222). Even though the narrator tries constantly to transcend his material and inauthentic existence throughout the novel, even to the point of violence, he ultimately fails because the new (in)authentic self is "dividual," meaning that there is no "unified" and "autonomous" true being that "can rise up" out of the debris of materialism and be authentic in a romantic sense (226). All attempts otherwise will fail and leave the remainder—something our narrator never quite learned. The accident at the beginning is a metaphor for the accident we all suffer through materialism. As a result of this "trauma," we feel inauthentic when we compare who we are now to what people were in the modern era. But that modern

era is over, never to return. Their concept of authenticity no longer applies in today's technological world. Therefore, we need a new definition of authenticity—the new (in)authentic self is who we are now.

Completing the Circle—Dangers of Denying Multiple Identities as New Authenticity

In his recently published novel *The Circle*, David Eggers paints a very familiar world where a powerful internet company called "The Circle" attempts to make everything known, transparent. This company embodies youth (literally—no one over 35 works there) and smells of a Google simulacra with its fun/relaxed vibe and Silicon Valley roots. The Circle cut its teeth with TruYou, an eerily Facebook-ish social network that takes "all of every user's needs and tools, into one pot…one account, one identity, one password one payment system, per person. There were no more passwords, no multiple identities" (Eggers 21). With this invention, "the era of false identities, identity theft, multiple user names, complicated passwords and payment systems was over," assuming that "false identities" and "multiple user names" were on par with thievery (or simply a pain to remember) (21).

This demand to consolidate everything, to know everything and everyone's "true" identity, leads to a cry for transparency from TruYou users across the world. The desire for the old, romantic notion of authentic existence fuels these calls for the "truth" and this mindless mantra echoes throughout the halls of The Circle: "All that happens must be known" (Eggers 67). After all, all these multiple identities we now have online make it

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nearly impossible to really *know* anyone—at least, according to romantic notions of the self. Mae Holland, the "newbie" on The Circle's campus, questions the inability for people to really know her through her social network:

> So what had so mortified her during Gus's presentation? She couldn't put her finger on it. Was it only the surprise of it? Was it the pinpoint accuracy of the algorithms? Maybe. But then again, it wasn't entirely accurate, so was *that* the problem? Having a matrix of preferences presented as your essence, as the whole you? Maybe that was it. It was some kind of mirror, but it was incomplete, distorted. (Eggers 125)

The need to break through this fragmented self (as she, like many of us, sees that fragmented self as inauthentic) leads Mae down a dangerous path with "truth" and transparency as the answer to all of our identity problems since the onset of the internet and social networks. As Mae falls deeper and deeper into the rabbit hole, she spouts the lame "sharing is caring" mantra as she gives new meaning to the word "multi-tasking." She sends smiles and frowns to hundreds of social-network pages and personal status updates, believing she is making a difference in war-torn countries simply by pressing "smile" or "frown" (similar to "liking" something on Facebook). Mae also is one of the first people to become fully transparent, electing to wear a necklace with a camera and audio to capture everything she sees and says to a rapt audience with numbers in the steady millions. By the end of the novel, she inadvertently kills a close friend, betrays another close friend, alienates herself from her parents, advocates mandatory

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voting/membership to The Circle, destroys democracy, and is ultimately a brain-washed robot who constantly nods her head to a voice coming through her earpiece that is designed to sound exactly like her. All of this happens in the name of truth and the demand for constant access, of recapturing that romantic notion of authenticity by denying this new multi-layered authentic self in favor of one (and therefore "true") self.

Eggers paints a shocking portrait of a possible future that may cause many readers to shake their heads in disbelief. At times, he sounds like a crazy harbinger of the end of the world, flinging his words of gloom and doom to an audience of young, eye-rolling digital natives. But there is some glimmer of truth in his novel, and while the story presents a hyperbolic future, it is a possible future nonetheless.

As you can see, we can trace the discourse of authenticity through important novels throughout the years and see how these novels respond to contemporary ideas of what it means to be an authentic individual. As technologies change over the years, the impact they have on our individuality is not forgotten by the authors mentioned above. These authors remind us what so many of us wish were not true: that these technologies are not simply tools we use to enhance our lives but can actually be tools that use and change us by breaking apart romantic notions of the authentic self while placing users within hegemonic structures without us even realizing it is happening until it is too late to change it. Now it's time to think about what this means for us who teach writing in the composition classroom of today.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW AUTHENTIC SELF AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

"The purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and

spontaneously in relation to the world—not to impose a prefabricated definition of the

world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself." Thomas Merton

"Learning to Live"

Authenticity Discourse and Writing

Over the course of this study, I have looked at how the discourse of authenticity

has touched philosophy, psychology, culture, and literature from the past to the present

day. I have argued for a theory that believes digital materialism today traumatizes our

identity to the point that we purposefully divide ourselves via social network sites in an

attempt to remain authentic. Thus, the new authentic self is dividual, not individual.

Now, I come to the application part of this study and look to add this new authentic self

to the composition pedagogy lexicon. It is no new idea that writing is a very personal act;

it is nearly impossible to write about writing theory and pedagogy without discussing the

concept of identity. As a result of this impossibility, writing theory tries to deal with this

issue in various ways. Current-Traditionalists try to ignore identity completely;

Expressivists build their whole theory around the concept of a one, true self; Social-

Constructivists argue that identity is constructed by our various discourse communities and languages and that there is no autonomous self separate from these constructions. Neither pedagogy is completely successful as each relies on a rejection of some facet of identity, a point that Peter Elbow struggles with in his essay, "What Do We Mean When We Talk about Voice in Texts?":

> At one extreme, the "sentimental" position says, "Hold fast to your 'you' at all costs. Don't give in and write in the voice 'they' want. Your voice is the only powerful voice to use. Your true voice will conquer all difficulties." At the other extreme, the "sophisticated" position says, "Your sense of 'you' is just an illusion of late Romantic, bourgeois capitalism. Forget it. You have no self. There is no such thing. You are nothing but roles. Write in the role that is appropriate for this situation. (28)

Elbow suggests a truce between these beliefs, suggesting that "we can come at our writing from both sides of the identity fence" (28). While this idea is admirable, it does not quite work either as each of these beliefs and theories bases its response on the concept of authenticity—even composition theory is not immune to the authenticity hoax. Both Expressivism and Social Constructivism build their theories from a concept of the ideal and authentic self in an attempt to answer the question: Who are you? Are you authentic because you have a true, unique inner core? Or is authenticity the result of our relationship with our social surroundings and cultures? This hoax stunts our growth

regarding identity, as well as stunts our growth as writers in a multi-modal, digital, and global world.

Personal writing is perhaps now, more than ever, at the forefront of our digital lives. We share (and arguably over-share) personal details online through various social networks, posting videos and pictures online and texting intimate photos to our friends and family. Our language has changed as a result, and we speak and write in text talk even when we are not texting. When we are with friends, many of us encourage each other to try new things by saying, "YOLO." Larry David pokes fun at our habit of speaking in text talk in an episode of his HBO show *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. In this episode, entitled "Palestinian Chicken," his character is annoyed with a female friend who prefers to say "LOL" instead of actually laughing out loud when she hears something funny. These verbal texts are just one example of how the line between digital and organic is blended today. We speak loudly on our cell phones, unashamed if our conversation with another person is overheard by complete strangers. The personal is the public. Just as the lines between author and audience are blurred, so, too, is the notion of personal and public information. Millennials ushered in a new era where "you" are the most important voice and opinion out there—that your voice needs to be heard. Because of this focus on the personal, the hope to be an authentic person is arguably stronger now than ever as we are more "out there" than ever before. Our lives online reveal to us the multiplicity of our identities, and we shrink from this multiplicity, turning towards reality television and found-footage films to find comfort in an older version of reality. We are

learning now what modernists and postmodernists knew for years, hence the authenticity

hoax problem. Since we are all writers online, we have become aware of the complicated

"I" in our writing and our online representations. Thus, "we recognize that individuals

are fragmented and fragmentary," which is why "theorists today use the word *subject*

rather than *individual* to emphasize the formations that 'subject,' or structure, human

identity and thinking" (Spigelman 39).

The "I" that Millennials bring into the composition classroom is not the

autonomous "I" of earlier times. Therefore, we cannot expect to apply prior concepts of

the self and expect them to fully work with our students today. Compositionists need to

let go of this outdated concept of authenticity and embrace the new, dividual authentic

self in order to truly move forward and remain relevant to academic writing students in a

posthuman and digitized world. We must realize that "the personal in composition

instruction becomes problematic if it represents a stable and unmediated mind at work"

as we are anything but this solid and unbroken being (Spigelman 39). I argue that

because of the new authentic self, face-to-face (F2F) composition courses are no longer

the ideal teaching environment. F2F courses represent the romantic notion of

authenticity and only serve to stunt student development and acceptance of their dividual

selves as authentic. Therefore, we need to seriously consider the validity of F2F

composition courses while, at the same time, pushing for primarily synchronous online

courses that more closely represent who are students are as dividuals and writers today.

Expressivism, Social-Constructionism, and Solipsism

Before we can look at how this new authentic self is best taught in a synchronous online environment, I want to look first at two of the more popular forms of composition pedagogy in order to prove how composition theory is dependent upon the individual and the personal. These two popular pedagogies are Expressivism and Social-Constructionism. Christopher Burnham defines Expressivism as a theory that "places the writer in the center, articulates its theory, and develops its pedagogical system by assigning the highest value to the writer and her imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development and how that development influences individual consciousness and social behavior" ("Expressive Pedagogy" 19). Karen Surman Paley's definition is also important to note as she defines Expressivism "as a pedagogy that includes (but is by no means limited to) an openness to the use of personal narrative, a particular type of the narrative mode of discourse" (13). I agree with Paley when she defines personal narrative as a narrative that "takes the writer's own experience as its focus" and "involves the narrational *I* that seems to be the actual voice of the person who writes" (13). Since the role of the writer is primary, so is the concept of voice in a piece of writing, and this concept drives much of Expressivism pedagogy.

Expressionistic rhetoric, much like the discourse of authenticity, is a product of its time. Between 1920 and 1940, James Berlin notes that "liberal culture helped create a climate in which expressionistic rhetoric could develop," citing life post-World War II and post-Freud as the origin of the theory (*Rhetoric and Reality* 73). This statement puts

expressionistic rhetoric in direct conversation with modernist fiction as many modernist writers also wrote as a response to the horrors of war and Freud's concept of the unconscious self. Both expressionistic rhetoric and modern fiction sought to reaffirm the importance of humanity after a massive war destroyed previous concepts of identity. Also, modernist fiction writers were concerned with the concept of voice in their own writings, wanting to portray their characters authentically via free indirect discourse and stream-of-consciousness writing.

Berlin goes on to explain that "the aim of education for both aesthetic expressionists and Freudians became individual transformation—not social change—as they key to both social and personal well-being," introducing an odd alliance between "patrician romanticism, aesthetic expressionism, and a domesticated Freudianism" that emphasized creativity and individuality in the classroom (*Rhetoric and Reality* 74). In this expressionist classroom, the teacher serves as a conduit for students, guiding them to self-realization and truth, much like Platonic dialogue. For Berlin, "this means that writing can be learned but not taught" as each individual needs to experience that moment of personal clarity on their own (74). Writing helps students with "shaping a new and better self" (75).

Expressivism flourished as part of the Process Movement in the 1960s, a movement that was a response to the rigid beliefs of Current-Traditional pedagogy that believed writing was all about the finished product. Process theories, on the other hand, saw writing as a never-ending process. Donald Murray proclaims in "Teach Writing as a

Process, Not a Product" that "instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach unfinished writing, and glory in its unfinishedness" and that writing is a "discovery" (2). Part of this discovery process involves listening and adhering to your inner voice by using "language as a tool of exploration to see beyond what [you] know" (Murray "Internal Revision" 125).

Unlike expressionist rhetoric in the first half the century, expressionists in this period understood the importance of the relationship between self and language, believing that "the unique inner glimpse of the individual is still primary, but language becomes an element in its nurturing" (Berlin *Rhetoric and Reality* 146). Thus, the "inner vision finally exists apart from language, but language is necessary in order for the individual to shape an interpretation that constitutes a better approximation of it" (Berlin *Rhetoric and Reality* 153). This "inner vision" is a vision of an authentic self and authentic inner voice. This inner voice represents that inner, authentic core, which (like the concept of authenticity) is difficult to define.

Peter Elbow calls voice in writing "something mysterious and hard to define," but is quick to add that "writing with no voice is dead, mechanical, faceless" (*Writing With Power* 286-87). Elbow distinguishes three kinds of writing "voices": writing without voice, writing with voice, and writing with real voice. Writing with voice "is what most people have in their speech but lack in their writing…the sound of 'them'" (288). There are some voices that appear lively, but are not the "real" and true voice. The true, real voice for Elbow consists of "sounding like our real self" (293). Note that he writes real

"self," meaning one true self, much like the romantic idea of authenticity. Therefore, to find this real voice one must write without an audience in mind, hence Elbow's love of freewriting. Freewriting allows writers to experiment with language in order to unearth that inner self.

While some may note that this focus on discovering the inner authentic self as a lesson in solipsism, Elbow (and Plato for that matter) would disagree. After all, "the personal is the political" and "to arrive at self-understanding and self-expression will inevitably lead to a better social order" (Berlin *Rhetoric and Reality* 155). When Elbow puts "personal experience into human interactions, [he]…hopes to increase our chances for identifying with one another and, as a result, our chances for restructuring community" (Fishman 649). Therefore, expressionism is "more than self-discovery" as it helps us "strive to understand our own expressions" so we might "seek insight into the work of others" (650). After all, "expressions are personal discoveries" (652). Before we can hope to understand others through dialogue, we need to know who we are first—we need to discover our one, true authentic self and harness our real voice.

An audience, primarily a teacher-academic audience, can serve as the arch nemesis of real voice, creating a voice hybrid that Ken Macrorie terms "Engfish." He calls this version of language "Engfish" because it reeks of disingenuousness much like a rotten fish reeks. The student writes in an effort to portray what she thinks her teacher wants, adapting an academic discourse that is full of jargons and insincerity (not unlike Bartholomae's thoughts in "Inventing the University"). Engfish is "dead" language

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because there's no soul in it, no authenticity (Macrorie 13). Macrorie goes on to state that this type of writing is truthful because the writer "reaches for impressive language" and "imitates the style of adults" (16). By making this point, Macrorie sets up the familiar dualism of sincere (authentic) and insincere (inauthentic) writing. Writing is considered "good" only when the author speaks "in authentic voice" (33).

Elbow's concept of real voice is also heavily associated with Freud's unconscious self as it is something deep within our psyche that we may not even know exists until some action or event digs beneath our layers to unearth it. Because of the vulnerability associated with this digging to the inner core, Elbow believes that people ignore using their real voice in order to avoid this feeling of vulnerability (*Writing with Power* 309). This vulnerability can mean "having feelings and memories [you] would rather not have" as "using real voice may even mean finding you *believe* things you don't wish to believe" (309 emphasis in original). Elbow also warns "that you are looking for something mysterious and hidden" and that "there are no outward linguistic characteristics to point to in writing with real voice" (312). With this statement, there is the immediate separation between language and identity as true identity cannot be fully explained through language. This belief in Expressivism is has been attacked by Social-Constructivists, but more on that later.

Feelings and thoughts buried deep within can be brought up through freewriting, unleashing that inner core of the true self that can have a massive effect not only on the writer but also on readers. Part of this effect is power—power to use your real voice to

shake things up, to pull readers in. Perhaps this power is one reason why Expressivism refuses to fade away completely as the theory empowers many traditionally marginalized writers through personal and literacy narratives. For example, Spigelman writes that the personal's relation to politics allows writers to use "personal experience to counter gender discrimination, to encourage consciousness-raising, and to oppose and resist oppressive pedagogies, department politics, and research practices," naming Joy Richie, Adrienne Rich, and Lyn Z Bloom as a few examples (11).

Some theorists have argued in favor of a mix of personal and academic writing, blending the two genres by seeing value in how our personal experiences feed into our research and academic personas. Candace Spigelman is one such advocate, arguing for compositionists to "see what we gain by combining the very different 'orientations' or world views imposed by personal and academic discourse as *personal academic discourse*" as this "approach creates useful contradictions, contributes more complicated meanings, and so may provoke greater insights than reading or writing either experimental or academic modes separately" (3).

Expressivism, much like the term authenticity, has had its fair share of critics. Paley sums it up well when she states that "the 'expressivist' has become the intellectually limited ingénue to the sophisticated rhetorician of academic discourse and cultural criticism" (18). This animosity towards Expressivism is typically a "knee-jerk dismissal" as the result of two major theorists of composition pedagogy: Lester Faigley and James Berlin (Paley 18). Expressivism pedagogy often assumes that we have one

true core within and that writing allows us to "express" this authentic self. However, as Lester Faigley points out (in his book *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition)*, "to ask students to write authentically about the self assumes that unified consciousness can be laid out on the page" (128). The pressure to write "authentically" took a toll on writers, especially in light of Freud's unconscious. Faigley asks, "How can one possibly express one's *full* self, including the unconscious part? And what if one is sincerely expressing one's conscious self but unconsciously repressing something that remains unexpressed? Is the writer sincere or insincere?" (127 emphasis in original).

Faigley also disagrees with the belief that teaching Expressivism and voice leads to student empowerment. He writes:

Those who encourage 'authentic voices' in student writing often speak of giving students 'ownership' of a text or 'empowering' students. The former conflates the capitalistic notion of property rights (as when my creative writing colleagues down the hall talk about selling the movie rights to their books) with autobiographical writing. The latter notion sounds like something all teachers would support (for who among us would 'disempower' students), but it avoids the question of how exactly teachers are to give students power. Is it in self-expression or is it in earning power? (128)

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Basically, for Faigley, expressionistic pedagogy sounds fantastic but fails to really offer students the agency they need to achieve power because the theory holds on too tightly to the notion of authenticity and sincerity. If you do not write authentically, then you are not a sincere writer and will be judged accordingly and any "power" you feel you gain by writing authentically is no real power at all. In his article "Judging Writing, Judging Selves," Faigley states that "it is this notion of the student as developing rational consciousness that makes most talk of *empowerment* so confused." (411 emphasis original). Faigley goes to explain that "even though the ability to write in certain discourses is highly valued in technologically advanced nations, power is exercised in a network of social relations and reconstituted in each act of communicating" (411). Therefore, the masks we wear on a daily basis in response to the various discourse communities we communicate with are also insincere because they are not our "real" self.

We are not telling the truth when we wear these masks because there is no "truth" in the traditional sense. With the destruction of a universal narrative, postmodernism denies the existence of a universal truth. Truth is relative and therefore it is impossible to decide if a writer is authentic/sincere or not. Instead, we can help our students better by learning how to "teach our students to analyze cultural definitions of the self, to understand how historically these definitions are created in discourse, and to recognize how definitions of the self are involved in the configuration of relations of power" (Faigley "Judging Writing" 411). Instead of pinpointing an authentic self and building a

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writer's consciousness from there, Faigley feels we need to look at how discourses form these definitions and beliefs.

This denial of societal influence is arguably the Achilles heel of Expressivism and process pedagogy. Faigley agrees that by "privileging process over form, process-oriented teaching worked against the teaching of writing according to correctness and fixed modes" (*Fragments* 71). In many ways "process pedagogy followed current-traditional rhetoric in denying the differences among writers and avoiding the social histories and consequences of particular acts of writing" (71-2). One of the points that expressionistic rhetoric theorists were proud of was the theory's ability "to aid students in resisting authoritarian structures by offering students experiences that challenged official versions of reality" (Faigley 57-8).

The critique that Expressivism ignores how society serves as an interpellation on individuals was one that the theory had no real answer to for a while, thus side-lining the pedagogy in favor of James Berlin's social-constructivist theory/pedagogy. Paley compares Berlin's impact on Expressivism pedagogy to the "Berlin Wall," a clever but also apt description of how Berlin stunts the acceptance of Expressivism as a legitimate pedagogy in composition theory.

In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, Berlin writes that subjective rhetoric assumes "that reality is a personal and private construct," thus divorcing the personal experience from the social experience and

nodding subtly towards Platonism (145). Berlin goes on to say that "for the

expressionist, truth is always discovered within, through an internal glimpse, an

examination of the private inner world" and that "in this view the material world is only

lifeless matter" (145). Therefore, "for the expressionist, solitary activity is always

promising, group activity always dangerous" (145). The disdain towards group work is

because groups are "sources of distortion of the individual's true vision" (146). Writing,

for Expressivism, is "seen as the attempt to record the truths discoverable within the

depths of the psyche, truths that are denied and distorted by society" (147).

In "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," Berlin continues his assault on

Expressivism, often tying his ideas to the solipsism common in Expressivism that ignores

the politics and power inherent in rhetoric:

> While the reality of the material, the social, and the linguistic are never denied,
>
> they are considered significant only insofar as they serve the needs of the
>
> individual. All fulfill their true function only when being exploited in the
>
> interests of locating the individual's authentic nature. Writing can be seen as a
>
> paradigmatic instance of this activity. It is an art, a creative act in which the
>
> process—the discovery of the true self—is as important as the product—the self
>
> discovered and expressed. (484)

Berlin claims that "the most important measure of authenticity, of genuine self-discovery

and self-revelation…is the presence of originality in expression; and this is the case

whether the writer is creating poetry or writing a business report" (485). Therefore, with expressionistic rhetoric, "discovering the true self in writing will simultaneously enable the individual to discover the truth of the situation which evoked the writing, a situation that, needless to say, must always be compatible with the development of the self, and this leads to the ideological dimension of the scheme" (485). While to search for and obtain authenticity sounds ideal, the lack of connection between the individual and society dooms expressionism for Berlin. Without a strong connection between the personal and society/materialism, we put ourselves at risk for ideological interpellation. Since "a rhetoric cannot escape the ideological question…to ignore this is to fail our responsibilities as teachers and as citizens" (493).

Since Berlin is working off of a romantic definition of authenticity, it's hard to argue with his points as they do conform to that traditional definition of the unique inner self that is true and often separate from outside influences. In response to this critique, efforts have been made by composition theorists to blend Expressivism with Social-Constructionism as the "personal is always political." Spiegelman advocates "personal academic writing" that seeks to use "I" and personal experiences to help hone and shape traditional academic arguments. Another response to the critique Social-Constructionists make of Expressivism is the theory's inability to truly do what it says it does. Keith Rhodes and Monica McFawn Robinson write in an recent article that "the root of the problem with social construction is easily stated; if reality is what the discourse

community says it is, then what the present community believes is, by definition, right"

(9). The authors write:

> The only way to enter the conversation is to join the established in-crowd. The
> best way to do that is to show allegiance to its beliefs. Thus, social construction is
> functionally tautological; by such means cults are born. ("Sheep in Wolves'
> Clothing" 9)

In the eyes of social constructionists "we're all right" and this creates solipsism much in

tune with earlier critiques of expressivism. Rhodes and Robinson continue their attack on

social constructivism with an eye towards Romanticism and expressivism:

> The idea that truth or reality is socially constructed seems, at first, explicitly anti-
> Romantic, since Romanticism is often thought of as a private quest for a fixed and
> inner truth. Yet Romantic truth itself resists definition (e.g., the beauty of art is
> ineffable), just as the antifoundational socially-mediated "truth" in constructionist
> theory cannot be pinned down, since it is forever in an irreducible cultural flux.
> Neither theory, then, provides an assessable goal. We can never be sure if
> students in an expressivist classroom have found their inner truth or not, since we
> cannot see into their minds. Likewise, we can never be sure if students truly
> understand their social situadedness, if they are sufficiently aware of the cultural
> forces bearing down on the writing task, or if this awareness has in fact done them
> any good. ("Sheep in Wolves' Clothing" 13)

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In spite of social constructionism's attempts to demean and reject expressivism, both theories struggle from an inability to truly understand (and therefore assess) our inability to "see into their minds." As teachers we can never truly know if our students understand what we are teaching them. Part of this problem is because we are using an outdated definition of authenticity that is too dependent upon that elusive "inner truth." The specter of "authenticity" haunts Expressivism and Social-Constructionism, and unless we accept the new authentic self and adapt our pedagogy to it, composition theory will struggle to gain a foothold in the 21st century and beyond.

One of Expressivism's claims to fame is the theory's ability to "reject dualistic thinking, viewing ambiguity as a source of productive dialectic" (Burnham 24). However, this theory is built upon the notion of the authentic self, automatically creating a binary between what is considered "authentic" and, as a result of this belief, "inauthentic." This authentic self in traditional notions of Expressivism is romantic in nature, giving the theory a modernist lining when it needs a more postmodern (or postpostmodern) focus. As a result of this inability to move into the postmodern world, Expressivism is looked down upon by some theorists as faulty, outdated, and obsolete. For theorist Richard Fulkerson, Expressivism is faulty because "there is no single "expressive" way to teach composition," pointing out that "some expressive teachers are interested in helping students mature and become more self-aware, more reflective" while "others are interested in writing as healing or therapy" ("Composition at the Turn" 667). Too many options mean too many questions regarding assessment and quality of writing.

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On the other hand, Expressivism is outdated and therefore obsolete. Lester Faigley notes that "where compositions studies has proven least receptive to postmodern theory is in surrendering its belief in the writer as an autonomous self, even at a time when extensive group collaboration is practiced in many writing classrooms" (15). The postmodern self, in contrast, is multiple (if it even exists). This is where an updated version of the protean self as a new authentic self can enter the composition theory lexicon and breathe new (and respected) life back into Expressivism as a theory and as pedagogy.

The belief in a protean self in composition pedagogy is not a new idea. Toby Fulwiler writes in "Claiming My Voice" that "the 'me' on whom I test my writing is multiple, dynamic, complicated, or shifty" and that these multiple selves were "created at key social, emotional and intellectual life markers, for whom I write" (43). His thoughts are similar but also different to my own argument. While he does latch onto the concept of the self as protean, he does so in a slightly negative way. Calling these selves "shifty" invokes negative images of an untrusting and easily manipulated being, while I feel the new authentic/protean self is not a "shifty" concept but an accepting one. Also, I agree that these multiple selves are created for specific moments, but not necessarily by choice. Our relationship with digital devices traumatizes us and, to survive, we consciously (and unconsciously) break up our identities and scatter them across the Internet wasteland to avoid destruction. Fulwiler attempts to distance himself from the term of authenticity in this article, but he keeps coming back to it. He writes, "while my private voice is 'authentic,' it is not distinctive" (45). By placing the term in quotes, Fulwiler gives the

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impression that the word "authentic" is a term he is uncomfortable using after his ideas

on multiple selves. This discomfort is understandable, but I argue we need to reclaim and

redefine authenticity to mean dividual rather than individual selves. Instead of "voice"

we have "voices." Let's not ignore the term or trap it within scare quotes in an attempt to

keep it at bay.

Digital Trauma and Composition

Personal writing is often inherently tied to the traumatic event as an

autobiographical narrative writing assignment meant to give the writer power over their

trauma. However, the concept of self-healing through writing is a risk not many writing

teachers wish to take. According to Lynn Worsham, writing a personal narrative about a

traumatic event often ends in one of two ways: mourning and narrative fetishism.

Mourning "involves the construction of a narrative—actually, the reconstruction of a

history," a result that "bears witness not to the *meaning* of the event but to *the truth of the*

event—the fact that it actually happened—and to *the truth of its incomprehensibility*, to

the impossibility of constructing a comprehensible story and an adequate representation

of the event" (178). On the other hand, narrative fetishism "results from an inability or,

more likely, a refusal to mourn that protects the psyche by employing trauma in a way

that disavows the very need for mourning…narrative fetishism substitutes for the painful

work of mourning the *pleasure* of narrative" (178). Thus, narrative fetishism "offers a

way of 'managing' trauma that does not demand…the kind of 'working through' that true

mourning entails" (178).

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Even though encouraging students to write about traumatic events may be a difficult and risky process, "we have an obligation to make ourselves and our students aware of our situatedness within a posttraumatic culture" that will ultimately help us answer the question, "How will we belong to our time?" (Worsham 181). Addressing the idea that our relationship with digital/cyber technologies traumatizes us in the composition classroom and asking students to write about this trauma can help to answer that question.

We can ask students to think critically about their relationships with social media networks, cell phones, laptops, and the internet. We can help students think about the idea of trauma and how being a digital native can be a traumatizing experience. Instead of a literacy narrative, students could work on a technology literacy narrative and try to pinpoint a moment of trauma associated with digital devices that caused them to split their identities online. And, finally, we can help students accept this new version of the dividual as an authentic and sincere concept that does not need to be shamed but embraced—a concept that can help us understand our place in what Worsham calls a "wound culture" and thus introduce how social media networks can be seen as part of the "pedagogies of disclosure" that "may serve less effectively as tools for gaining access to and integrating the unspeakable truth of traumatized subjects than as strategies of managing our own terror in an overwhelming world" (171). But to truly integrate the concept of a new authentic dividual we must meet that dividual in an arena that encourages and fosters this dividual self—synchronous online classes.

Putting a Multimodal Bandage on Digital Traumas and Dividual Selves

As Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Self note in "Studying Literacy in Digital Contexts," computers and composition pedagogy is "no longer the new kid on the block" as the discipline is over thirty years old (188). More and more institutions are adopting computers and digital technologies in the classroom and pushing for digital and multimodal assignments. The push towards multimodal pedagogy in the composition classroom is rooted in the belief "that composition instruction must change if it is to remain relevant and fulfill the goal of preparing effective and literate citizens for the 21st century" (Takayoshi & Selfe 8).

But who are these "literate citizens"? And why should knowing them and understanding them as authentic and traumatized dividuals affect our teaching of multimodal assignments? We understand that computer literacy is a "new" literacy and that traditional modes of communication are almost extinct. But how has this new literacy affected our students' psyches? As mentioned in chapter two, many of our students are millennials. Millennials grew up with a very distinct (but important) relationship with technology that many of us do not completely understand. Part of this relationship sees literacy as "a set of actions and transactions in which people use reading and writing for personal and social purposes," which includes self-fashioning dividual identities online (Flower 20). We should also remember that "to be literate is to control a repertoire of literate practices that matter in one's life, to be able to switch among them, and to do so with awareness" (21). Millennials are aware of these multiple identities;

unfortunately, this awareness comes with a sense of insincerity and inauthenticity, something we can see when a potential love interest we meet online turns out to be "someone else" in "real" life and this fraud makes us angry.

Our students are writing and creating videos, posting/editing photos, contributing to conversations on Reddit and Wikipedia, and challenging what it means to be an author and a reader. The lines have never been more blurred between the masculine "I" of the author and the passive reader—everything seems to be collaborative now. Therefore, I would add to Lunsford's statement that students are also producing multiple selves as a result of their relationship with these new forms of literacy.

Many of our students today enter the 21st century college classroom as the first-generation of digital natives, students who grew up tethered to digital technologies. They bring with them the new literacy of digital communication but also the new authentic self. And while instructors and composition theorists are quick to adapt to the former, it seems as if many of us have ignored the latter as we focus primarily on helping students learn how to communicate digitally while ignoring the one thing that can truly give these students the agency they need to fully communicate through multimodal outlets. For a definition of multimodality, I turn to Aimee Knight's definition that multimodal means "platforms that move between different modes of interaction, from visual, to voice, to touch" (147). Basically, "this means that the media students produce and consume on a daily basis are increasingly combining and converging" and assigning multimodal assignments allows students to use skills they already have in a critical and educational

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way (Knight 147). After all, "students, even very young students, are often more literate in the technical aspects of digital production than many of their teachers" since "many students are frequently exposed to popular technologies, have the leisure time to experiment with their own production, develop the social connections that encourage peer teaching and learning, and may have access to more advanced technology than is available at school" (NCTE Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies).

A lot of the theory on computers and composition focuses primarily on *how* to use technology in the composition classroom in order to facilitate instead of hinder knowledge and communication. For example, in "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class," authors Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe urge composition theorists and instructors to "recognize that the use of technology can exacerbate problems characteristic of American classrooms and [we] must continue to seek ways of using technology that equitably support all students in writing classes" (55). Teachers are encouraged to realize that "literacy is no longer our business" but rather "literacy and technology are" and this link between technology and literacy encourages us to help students examine *how* we create different meanings through remixed and multimodal assignments.

Instructors can only do what they can with the technologies they are given from their institutions, carefully planning and crafting multimodal assignments that can be taught and used within a short period of a semester. We create technology surveys and conduct digital literacies to see where our students stand on their familiarity with

technologies before moving forward to decide the best way to teach multimodal assignments. But multimodal assignments only serve to place a band-aid on a much larger problem—that F2F classes force students to take a step backward rather than forward in their dividual development.

Our students are multimodal due to their various (and complicated) relationships with various digital media and devices. To sustain their dividual selves online, millennials often connect and disconnect social media sites to portray different yet similar aspects of their selves. For example, a millennial may have a Facebook profile, a Twitter account, an Instagram account, and a Vimeo account. Each of these accounts allows different ways to communicate and portray a self via audio, visual, or textual outlets. Sometimes, a similar post will find its way onto all of these accounts; other times, a post may only be visible on one or two, depending upon how the user wants to form their specific identity to that specific site. A Facebook status may also post on a Twitter account; an Instagram photo may upload only on Twitter; a Vimeo video may also upload on Facebook. Millennials are inherently multimodal—in fact, they are good at it and thrive on the chance to survive online in different areas. The key for composition instructors is to help students think more rhetorically and critically about these multimodalities of the self and meet our students on their playing field.

Making the Case for Synchronous Online Writing Courses

Since so many millennials are turning college-age, it's not a surprise that the number of online classes available for students to take raised exponentially over the past decade. According to 2006 article in *The Wall Street Journal,* "online enrollment is skyrocketing and the recent repeal of a federal rule requiring colleges to provide at least half of their instruction on campus will boost it more" (Golden). In 2009, "colleges—including public, nonprofit private, and for-profit private institutions—reported that one million more students were enrolled in at least one Web-based course, bringing the total number of online students to 5.6 million" (Kaya). Also, the 2010 Eighth Annual Sloan Survey of Online Education reported that "nearly thirty percent of higher education students now take at least one course online" (Allen 2). More recently, the 2014 New Media Consortium Horizon Report of Higher Education notes the integration of online, hybrid and collaborative learning as one of the six key trends in higher education today. The NMC Horizon report states that "education paradigms are shifting to include more online learning, blended, and hybrid learning, and collaborative models" since "students already spend much of their free time on the Internet, learning and exchanging new information" (Johnson 10).

There are many reasons behind the online course push. The three primary reasons are convenience, low cost/high enrollments, and the chance to reach out to a more diverse variety of students (Smith 490). Students who choose online courses "often have specific physical factors that formatively influence their course experience: a work schedule may

affect the times of day at which they may participate and the level of fatigue they feel at those times; the physical setting—at home, maybe or work—may be relaxed, uninterrupted, distracting, or noisy; students' age and experiences may shape the identity or persona they (deliberately or unwittingly) share with their peers" (Gillam 28-9).

With the new authentic self, I would like to add one more reason. Since "the best practice in teaching happens when teachers artfully and effectively combine what they know about their students, the curriculum, and the conditions under which teaching and learning will occur," a fourth reason to provide online courses (synchronous not asynchronous) is because this is the best environment to teach who are students are now (Smith 490). F2F favors a more romantic notion of teaching, one in which everyone is in the same space at the same time and this environment is seen as more authentic than an online environment because we are physically close to each other. But what it means to be authentic has changed due to the trauma of digital materialism, and we must also change the concept of the composition classroom to match it.

Asynchronous online learning attempts to match who are students are today but, as I will argue later, this type of learning ultimately fails. What asynchronous online classrooms do right, however, is provide an environment that encourages a student's dividual nature to shine. In an online classroom space, students are usually given "opportunities for identity formation/modification based on interaction with others, and make use of critical digital literacies to approach course content" (Hilton 604). This kind of "learning community functions as a nexus between the personal and social spaces in

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which identity is formed" (604-05). Students are encouraged to construct an identity in these online classroom spaces much like constructing an identity on a social network site. A student has the power to decide what to post and what not to post, what to reveal and what to hide, in order to create yet another dividual identity in a space that encourages this formation. In online classes, "all participants—including instructors—must be encouraged to construct their virtual profiles in ways they feel best communicate the aspects of their identity they wish to share with the community" (608). This is far more difficult to do in a F2F classroom where others physically see/experience each other and can come to their own conclusions based on their observations, regardless of what the student attempts to reveal in class.

A common complaint for online learning is the encouragement for separateness between the students and the teachers, a separateness that seems counter to the goals we try to reach in composition classes. Critics of this part of online learning state that "the very characteristics of online learning that make it most attractive in university recruitment campaigns—the convenience of learning outside of real time, the ability to work from home or on the go—are the very things that disembody learners, separating them physically and temporally from their professors and classmates" (Gillam 26). In F2F classrooms, this disembodiment is not as common as "we may reasonably expect our learning communities to form organically; students get to know one another without conscious awareness of their own or others' rhetorical decisions" (27). One way to

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address this issue is to make at least some components of online learning synchronous instead of asynchronous.

A lot of online learning takes place in asynchronous environments as this set-up allows students to participate at any time or any day as their individual schedules allow. While this may seem ideal, millennials are tethered to technology to the point that traditional notions of time and space no longer need to apply. When a millennial sends a text, that text is expected to be answered quickly as if the conversation were face-to-face. Smart phones are easily connected to social network sites so when a user receives a message, the phone alerts that user to the message so the user can answer promptly. When we have online discussions for a class in an asynchronous environment, "discussion, outside of real time, changes from a rapidly accumulating and productively mutating give-and-take to a few solo-authored lines, posted in a temporal vacuum, answered if at all with another short post in a matter of days, not moments, regardless of whether the question has been answered or changed in the interval" (Gillam 31). Since millennials are always "on," an asynchronous environment is too lax for their dividual nature and does not truly teach them the value of thinking before posting. Asynchronous classes allow students to "have more time at their disposal in which to think about the words and thoughts of others and to formulate their own responses" (Hilton 604). But many of our students do not communicate in this way outside of the classroom online space. Teaching students the importance of quick critical thinking in a synchronous environment is far more valuable in a world where a tweet can haunt a person for years.

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After all, "compositionists should focus on incorporating into their pedagogy technologies that students are familiar with but do not think critically about" (Vie 10). While some parts of the online class may be asynchronous (i.e. uploading a paper/assignment), class discussions should be synchronous and mimic how students communicate today.

While not all of millennials are gamers, the way many of them communicate is very similar to how gamers communicate through mumble servers. Mumble servers, while not primarily for gaming purposes, allow users to communicate synchronously through voice-over software. The software is similar to Skype without the video option, making communication easier as a microphone is a lot more obtainable for students than a webcam. Mumble servers have a strong social aspect since users can chat while at school or at work with groups of companions of various numbers. Only one person is responsible for the monthly fee, which is insubstantial, and this person is the administrator of the server. The administrator sends out an IP address and password to potential friends, and these friends create user names when they join the server. This part is free for the friends—all they need to do is download the free server to their computers. And, like various social network sites, mumble servers allow users to type in status updates if a user must leave a chat for a moment.

To date, I was unable to find any pedagogical research that showed the use of mumble servers in an online environment in a composition classroom. Since mumble is easy to use (and teachers can upload tutorials from YouTube), implementing a mumble

synchronous discussion option in an online composition course would be very helpful to today's new authentic millennials. Using the software myself, I thought of my own college years using AOL Chat, and mumble creates this same friendly atmosphere. Another option for synchronous discussion that is in-line with how our students communicate today would be through text messaging.

Students, millennials in particular, are avid texters and value this form of communication to the point where they expect an instant response to a text—what may have started as an asynchronous form of communication into a more synchronous form of communication. As mentioned in the last chapter, part of the trauma of digital materialism is due to the decompression of space and time to the point where millennials feel they are always "on." We see this loss of time and space through a millennial's relationship with texting. In her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Sherry Turkle notes that many young people call texting "conversations" and while "a text message might give the impression of spontaneity to its recipient…teenagers admit they might spend ten minutes editing its opening line to get it just right" (200). In spite of this, texting often feels like a spontaneous form of communication for users. After all, "the self shaped in a world of rapid response measures success by calls made, emails answered, texts replied to, contacts reached" and there is a "technology-induced pressure for volume and velocity" where a text message sent is expected by the sender to be quickly responded to by the recipient (166). A way to utilize this feeling some millennials may have regarding

texting is to utilize a mass text-messaging synchronous system in an online classroom environment.

Mass text-messaging is a unique synchronous option because it allows an instructor to send students text messages without either party revealing cell phone numbers. Primarily used as a business tool, mass text-messages are crafted by one person online through a mass-texting service and sent out to members of a group who joined the service by plugging in their names and phone numbers. The sender and the users do not know any one's cell phone number, keeping the numbers private. However, many of these services do cost money—money that many college students (and instructors) may not want to pay. One service, though, is free for students and already used by many high school teachers: ClassPager.

ClassPager is a unique mass text-messaging service because it is geared primarily to teachers. Teachers can choose from three options (Premium, Plus, or Micro) based on how many students and classes they have and all three options include unlimited texting. While the Premium and the Plus options cost money, the Micro is free and is for one classroom with a maximum amount of 25 students—arguably the average amount of students in a composition classroom. Instructors can text students in class to answer certain questions or, in an online classroom, an instructor can conduct a text-message conversation with students primarily through cell phones. Of course, this only works if every student has a cell phone capable of sending and receiving text messages. Instructors who wish to use this synchronous option should conduct a technology survey

at the beginning of the course to make sure every person in the class can participate in this option.

Using a synchronous component in an online classroom may make many instructors nervous, especially since one of the highlights associated with online coursework is flexibility of schedule. However, a synchronous part of an online course best fits with who many of our students are today. Millennials are traumatized by digital materiality and are changed ontologically as a result of this trauma, redefining what it means to be an authentic person and how to communicate to other dividual authentic persons. As composition instructors, we need to stay abreast with how many of our students communicate if we are to remain relevant in academia. We can do this by helping students understand the importance of effectively communicating synchronously in a safe space by adding a mandatory synchronous component to an online composition course.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING OUR PLACE AS WOLVES

"I know who I am. After all these years, there's a victory in that." Rust Cohle *True Detective*

Summary of Research

At one point in time, to be authentic was to be sincere—to be moral—and this definition is perhaps the strongest concept of authenticity as it followed philosophy and literature for many years. If you were not authentic, then you were inauthentic and therefore immoral and insincere. Authenticity was something to strive for, something that gave life meaning. Sometimes this meaning tied to concepts of God; other times, when scientific progress dismantled the belief in God, the meaning could only be found within an individual self. Sometimes to be authentic was to be in tune with nature, rejecting the materialistic world as insincere and fake. During modernity and postmodernity, it seemed impossible to explicate the natural from the unnatural, making authenticity a hoax from a former time free of materialism and industrialism.

Literature traced this path of authenticity, at times celebrating and other times mourning our inability to be authentic in an increasingly industrial world. Authors wrote works that spoke to these fears and joys, sometimes even outlining possible alternatives

in novels in hopes that readers will take their messages and ideas to heart. Eventually, in the works of Tom McCarthy, materialism was seen as a kind of trauma to the human psyche, a trauma that splintered individuality and left us empty. To fill this void, we indulge in meaningless repetition of our moments when we felt most alive, most authentic, only to find these moments as manufactured as everything else in a postmodern world. The disdain and disappointment was palpable and we hungered for reality as digital devices and computer technologies inundated our lives.

Our hunger for reality and our obsession with authenticity brought new changes and ideas in an attempt to re-capture something we perhaps never really had. Filmmakers introduced "found-footage" documentary-type movies that mimicked reality. Organic and authentic food stores popped up across the nation, bragging about natural and authentic foods that are much better for us than any other food. But we were driven to these extremes because of Potter's authenticity hoax. We saw a fuzzy photograph of what we thought authenticity was and ignored the experts' analysis of the photo and their declaration that what we thought we saw was in fact some elaborate scheme—a weather balloon that looked like something far more mysterious. We clung to a definition that fell out of favor over the past decade and our inability to let go of the romantic ideal of authenticity ultimately made us unhappy and frustrated.

Because of this inability to let go of the past definition of authenticity, there needs to be a new definition of authenticity, one tied to the traumatic event of materiality, specifically digital materiality. This definition sees the dividual (rather than the

individual) as authentic, a dividual forced to split up identities through social media

networks in order to survive the trauma of always being "on." Our new relationships

formed primarily online need to be seen as authentic and not dismissed as more false than

relationships forged in person. Texting as the primary form of communication needs to

have as much authentic value as speaking face to face, or even speaking through the

phone. If we redefine what it means to be authentic in a digital age, then we give each

other permission to be happy with these new changes, with our dividuality. Millennials

today pride themselves on instantaneous online communication and relationships, as well

as their ability to create various identities online. But what does this mean for the

composition classroom?

Traditionally, the composition classroom is built on the romantic notion of what it

means to be an authentic individual. Expressivists and social-constructivists both build

their theories from the same building block of authenticity, which is why both of these

theories will fail in a constantly computer-driven, digitized classroom. To stay relevant, I

argue in favor of primarily offering online composition courses with a synchronous

component to adapt to this new authentic self of the millennial.

Potential Limitations

Changes in the composition classroom brought on by changing the definition of authenticity will not be easy or without complications. Issues of access are important but, as time goes on, more and more students will have the ability to participate in a synchronous option as digital devices and computers change and, with time, become more and more affordable. Many libraries, including the library at Texas Woman's University, allow students to rent out lap tops and iPads with their student IDs and many more libraries offer or will soon offer the same program. Even if all of the students in a course have the technology and access to participate in a mandatory synchronous option online, there are still potential problems to keep in mind.

In their article, "The Sociability of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning Environments," authors Kreijns, Kirschner, and Jochems note two major pitfalls when instructors attempt to create a conversation online. The first potential problem is "the tendency to assume that social interaction will occur just because the environment makes it possible" (9). Simply demanding a synchronous online chat does not necessarily create the atmosphere for stimulating and critical conversation. It's important for instructors to have a structure to these online discussions, which is why we need to give our students certain questions to think about and answer prior to the meeting online. Providing questions before an online discussion creates a structure that is at once firm yet flexible, allowing for the conversation to be as organic as it can be in a synthetic atmosphere.

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The second potential problem of implementing online chat in an online course

mentioned in "The Sociability of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning

Environments" is "the tendency to forget the social-psychological/social dimension of

social interaction that is salient in various levels of *non-task* contexts" (Kreijns 9).

Without physically looking at each other like we can in a F2F environment, we risk

forgetting everyone's unique and important identity. This forgetfulness is perhaps why

many millennials are cruel to others in an online environment as opposed to a F2F space

as we tend to forget we are talking to actual human beings with actual identities similar

and different from our own when we talk to others through a computer screen. To ask

students to converse with each other synchronously creates a specific virtual space in the

classroom that needs to be formatted in a specific way in order to foster true critical

thinking. After all, "social interaction is important for establishing a social space in

which a structure can be found that encompasses social relationships, group cohesion,

trust and belonging, all of which contribute to open communication, critical thinking,

supportive interaction, and social negotiation" (Kreijns 10). Online communication can

empower our students to speak up more than they possibly would in a F2F classroom

since "in real-time communication the use of text chat might be recommended in order to

empower women, minorities, and other marginalized people" (Blau 22). However, this

empowerment does not mean as much if we ignore it when it happens.

It might seem like a positive to be able to ignore individual identities in an online

classroom because educators do not need to deal with any potential issues associated with

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cultural and social differences. However, ignoring these differences does not help our

students learn valuable lessons regarding communication and the social understanding of

others. As instructors, we must be aware of these issues when using synchronous chat

options and remind our students of the complexities of identity and interaction within the

communicative space. To do this, I suggest using the pre-chat questions to address issues

related to identity and society, asking students to discuss their own personal experiences

with certain issues and opening that door that so many of us would rather see closed.

Invite the "I" in the conversation and serve as an example of acceptance and

understanding for your students during the chat, but remember the complexity and

dividuality of this "I."

Suggestions for Further Research

The limitations mentioned above, as well as others, create possible threads for

future research regarding authenticity, writing, and digital materialism. Ultimately, I

would like to compose an empirical study to see if my hypothesis regarding possible

classroom changes would work. This study would include implementing different kinds

of synchronous components to an online composition environment and examining which

options facilitate more learning and critical thinking than others. These different types of

components could include a synchronous chat room, a synchronous and personal

conference with a student, and mass text-messaging.

This research is also limited to a westernized notion of authenticity and millennials, assuming that most of our students are digital natives. While this may be true in many universities, it is not true in smaller, rural universities and colleges, and I am interested in examining how these students fit into the millennial and authenticity definitions put forth in this dissertation, as well as in conversations of agency and access. I would also like to eventually spread out this research to include gender and disability research and how my new definition of authenticity speaks to those important conversations.

Also, with each passing day newer and different technologies emerge and fall into the hands of many of our students. I am interested in following these changes over time and how our students adapt and change as a result of these digital devices. Technoculture (an area of research that examines how technology is shaped by, and shapes, culture) is definitely an interesting field of study and I would like to follow it and implement the discourse of authenticity along with it.

Final Thoughts

In their essay "1914: One or Several Wolves?" authors Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write that "we're not far from wolves" since in "becoming-wolf the important thing is the position of the mass, and above all the position of the subject itself in relation to the pack or wolf-multiplicity: how the subject joins or does not join the pack, how far away it stays, how it does or does not hold to the multiplicity" (28-9).

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To see and understand our multiplicity, our dividuality, is not insanity but a way of becoming who we are—the new authentic and dividual self (or wolf). These authors note that "where psychoanalysis says, 'Stop, find your self again,' we should say instead, "Let's go further still, we haven't found our BwO ["body without organs"] yet, we haven't sufficiently dismantled our self" ("How Do You" 151). Looking back at the beginning of this study and Facebook's fifty gender options, we see that nothing is absolute, not even identity. We are both of and apart of society and perhaps the new definition of authenticity help us to become aware and accepting of our multiplicities to become what Deleuze and Guttari call a BwO. Perhaps this new definition will free us from the limitations of society and allow us to become a BwO. What will happen if we remember and reclaim our place as wolves? If there is no absolute truth to find, no limitations imposed upon us by definitions that hold us back from becoming, what will we discover instead?

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