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Resistance and engagement in the critical classroom: a psychoanalytic reading of critical pedagogy

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RESISTANCE AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE CRITICAL CLASSROOM: A

PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

by

Lenore DeBok Maybaum

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy, and Culture)
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Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Carolyn Colvin

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee
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To my grandfather, Herbert DeBok

There is so little to remember of anyone-- an anecdote, a conversation at a table. But every memory is turned over and over again, every word, however chance, written in the heart in the hope that memory will fulfill itself, and become flesh, and that the wanderers will find a way home, and the perished, whose lack we always feel, will step through the door finally and stroke our hair with dreaming habitual fondness not having meant to keep us waiting long.

Marilynne Robinson
Housekeeping

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

Søren Kierkegaard, Papers and Journals

Horizon Lines

Heading north along the Pacific on Interstate Five, I watch as the Cascade Mountain Range disappears and reappears through the early morning fog, darkened shadows against the grey backdrop of sky. It strikes me as deceptive, this landscape of obscured edges and apparitions.

I am a displaced Midwesterner.

In Iowa, where I've spent the last two decades of my life, there is an acute horizon line, stark and uninterrupted, a reassurance: Here is where earth and sky meet, and this is my relationship to it all. As I make my way north through the Willamette Valley, however, I am not sure where I stand.

I am a displaced student.

It is September, a week before my 23rd birthday, and the start of my first year of graduate school, the reason for my move 2000 miles northwest. Today, only two months after finishing my own undergraduate degree, I find myself playing the role of teacher, at both a university and a prison, and must grapple with the kind of cognitive dissonance produced by this strange introduction to teaching in two very disparate settings. I am unsettled, displaced by this new role, for which I feel utterly unprepared. I use the word 'role' intentionally here, as those early weeks included various performances of teacher-- some scripted, some improvised, each an attempt to root myself in this new and uncertain identity.

Passing miles of blueberry orchards and clover seed fields, radiant tides of crimson and white, I look out the window as the ghost of the Cascades reemerges from

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the fog then dissipates again into the grey nothingness. I sip my coffee and turn up "The Writer's Almanac" for the comfort of Garrison Keillor's north central accent, a reminder of my Midwestern home, a horizon line.

I am a displaced and marked outsider.

Once within the prison, where I am teaching a 15-week course in narrative writing, I pass through a security gate, two metal detectors, and one bag-check. The guard "chaperones" me to our classroom, a stripped space that is unexceptional but for its three glass walls that invite the imposing gaze of another anonymous male guard. On the way, we walk in silence through a heavy metal door and out into the open-air courtyard, which, in spite of being enclosed by high grey walls, is brightened by a rare opening in the late summer sky.

The walk through this courtyard to the classroom always seems longer than it is. For here, as we step out into the light and my eyes begin to adjust, the cool Pacific air thickens; my legs, suddenly weighted, feel submerged in water. I glance up, self-conscious and aware of the clusters of women around me. From what I can tell without looking too long, today in the courtyard there are a dozen or so inmates, identically dressed, a few in small circles holding quiet conversations and a few sitting in solitude, seemingly unresponsive to the activity around them.

A familiar wave of insecurity overcomes me: I have been doing this for a month now, yet I still don't know if I should smile at inmates as I pass, or if I should move through the courtyard without calling more attention to myself than I already am in my high heels and patterned dress. The courtyard is a reminder that the more deeply I move inside the institution, the more my outsider status is revealed.

With both the privileges and trappings of being an outsider, I develop a critical curriculum in hopes of counteracting the highly prescribed, regulated, and despotic environment of the prison setting. I encourage my students to write "counternarratives," oppositional responses to sexism, classism, and racism, those very

interlocking systems of domination that I believe keep prisons in business. After all, I think, these women's voices have been silenced—their experiences, marginalized and trivialized-- by oppression both within and outside of the institution. By bringing critical literacy to them, my aim is to invite them to take up the feminist and critical theories that had given me the language to frame my experiences, ultimately empowering my voice, years ago.

And as a young teacher anxious and displaced in her new role in the classroom, I desperately need to feel like my curriculum "makes a difference" for my students, if only to reassure myself that I am in the right place, playing the right role.

I am a displaced teacher.

I am then bewildered and disappointed when I read their first essays on the theme of home. Each in her own way, the students construct idyllic portraits of their childhoods: benevolent parents, pastoral scenes of play, and elaborate descriptions of material abundance that did not match up with the inmates' spoken narratives in class discussion, narratives of absent or abusive fathers and lovers, substance abuse, and the desperation of poverty. One particular inmate, who was incarcerated after setting her house on fire with her two children inside, chronicles home as follows:

> It's coming on spring at my home and in the spring particularly, "Home Sweet Home" is an apt phrase…The love of flowers and growing things is carried into the house. Abundant bouquets of fresh flowers are on the mantle; artwork of floral motifs on the wall, and elegant rose patterned valances above the windows…Upon entering the home, a feeling of serenity, peace, and kinship can be felt by all. Perhaps it is the guardian angel that sits upon the front door frame watching all those who enter and exit with its protective gaze. Or perhaps it is the love that is shared among those who call this house a home.

I write these first essays off as ideology at work, evidenced by my students' internalization of the identity expectations of the institution. Surely they misunderstood bell hooks's discussion of the "shadow self," a concept that played a crucial role throughout the first part of the course, the essential act of "critically confronting" the

self of our past, of "talking back" and self-defining through narratives of resistance (hooks,1999, p. 5). I am further dismayed when reading students' reflective pieces, many of which echo the following response:

> I don't really desire to tell my story. If I was through [incarceration] to tell it, I would emphasize mostly taking a look at yourself and trying to change the old you for the "new" you. Do I desire to tell my story? Yes and no. I've never been in trouble before, no prior arrests, citations, or even trips to the principal's office. I feel like an outsider here. Being an outsider, I think I see things differently…but after I'm out of here I have a feeling that I will want to put it all behind me and try to forget it ever happened.

Neither counternarratives nor testimonies that bear witness to the oppressive materiality of incarceration, my students' first essays seemed contrived and trite, idealized portraits that abandoned the critical lenses we had discussed so rigorously in class. Their resistance casts shadows over my own horizon line, critical pedagogy, disorienting me in the larger landscape of teaching and learning. Who am I as a critical educator without my students' willingness to take up the critical lenses of the class?

Desire and Displacement in Teaching and Learning

The horizon line, its temporal, dynamic dimension, serves as a useful metaphor for thinking about identity: It cannot be taken in entirely, for as I move toward it-- desiring to inhabit or move beyond it-- its boundaries become elusive and obscured. Yet the desire for a coherent, recognized identity, a stark and static horizon line, brings me into relation with my surroundings and circumstances, giving me the sense that I am moving toward something, vague and distant, seemingly static and enduring. However briefly, I am made recognizable.

In this research, I consider the horizon lines of teaching and learning by examining the identities of the classroom, their sometimes obscured and sometimes more starkly defined boundaries, and how the desire for a coherent, recognized identity shapes the dynamics of the classroom. Specifically, by drawing on the temporal,

elusive dimensions of identity, particularly my own identity as a radical, self-actualized critical educator, I trace how we, as teachers, look for distinct and orientating moments of recognition in the classroom, reassuring horizon lines that give us the sense of our place within the larger landscape of the classroom. But these orienting moments, however meaningful, are ultimately fictional: Just as one can never reach the horizon line, our stories of ourselves as certain kinds of teachers and students disappear and reappear through the dynamic and relational work of teaching and learning. I use the horizon line and its temporality to symbolize the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves in the work of education, those meaningful fictions that anchor us, however briefly, in the larger landscape of the classroom.

I open this research in a reconstruction of my early days of learning to teach to raise questions about the work of the classroom from my own beginnings, and to implicate my own desires as a driving force behind teaching and learning in my critical classroom. Central to this examination is how my own identity as a teacher has been shaped by discourses of critical pedagogy, its insistence on rationality as the primary source of emancipatory power, and my later, ongoing effort to teach critical literacy without foreclosing nonrational currents in the classroom, including subjectivity, desire, pleasure, and play. In this research, by foregrounding these nonrational dimensions of teaching and learning, I seek to redefine criticality by shifting to a psychoanalytically informed reading of critical autoethnography.

Drawing on my own and my students' autoethnographic accounts of our literacy histories-- narratives of how we came to identify or resist identifying ourselves as readers, writers, students, and teacher—I seek to raise questions about the work of the critical classroom and to create "an occasion for an analytic turn needed to understand the psychical difficulties we teachers have in remembering our beginnings, our learning to teach" (Britzman, 2006, p. 108). Drawing on these narrative accounts of our histories of learning, this research is then the story and study of memory, a self-conscious

exploration of the interplay between the introspective, engaged self and the larger dynamics of a classroom culture. It is an educational autoethnography that foregrounds narrative inquiry and storytelling in my effort to make meaning of experience and to complicate notions of critical literacy in the composition classes I now teach.

A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into the Critical Classroom

Critical pedagogy was the horizon line of my early days of *learning to teach*, what Deborah Britzman (2006) has aptly referred to as one's "childhood of teaching" (p. 108), and this research is premised on how critical pedagogy, like any educational enterprise, is a function of identity and desire: "In order to have any success at all, [education] must engage the identities and desire of students [and] teachers" (Bracher, 2002, p. 93). The purpose of this research then was to create a reflexive space in which I could explore how my own desires drive my teaching, including the conscious and unconscious demands my commitment to critical pedagogy places on my students, and how my students' desires create moments of collision and collusion--moments of resistance and transference-- in the critical classroom.

While I will provide a more in-depth discussion of critical pedagogy and its theoretical underpinnings in the Literature Review, here I will offer a cursory definition of it as the project of encouraging learners to become conscious of their social conditions, including social conditions problematized by forms of oppression and social injustice (Cho, 2009, p. 95). Proponents of critical pedagogy traditionally emphasize oppression alongside class, race, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2000). Paulo Freire, the key figure in the development of critical pedagogy, argues that the pedagogical relationship cannot exist outside of the broader social relations that critical pedagogues seek to make conscious. This means that the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student reflects the oppressiveness of those larger social conditions, at least in part, therefore necessitating

a new pedagogical relationship premised on dialogue. Freire (1985) writes, "To be an act of knowing, the adult literacy process demands among teachers and students a relationship of authentic dialogue" (p. 49). Further, "true dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a knowable object that mediates between them" (p. 49).

But the problem with critical pedagogy, as I will trace through feminist and postmodern critiques in the Literature Review, is that many of its assumptions are cloaked in abstractions and an overvaluation of rationality and reason. In 1989, Elizabeth Ellsworth's provocative essay "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering" posed serious questions of critical pedagogy, taking to task its "high level of abstraction," which is more "appropriate (yet hardly more helpful) for philosophical debates," and ultimately "offers only the most abstract, contextualized criteria for choosing one position over others" (pp. 300-301). For instance, in the process of constructing dialogue as the new, more liberating, pedagogical relationship, an "irrational Other" (p. 301) is assumed to exist, while the rational dialogic subject assumes characteristics that are constitutive of a "European, White, male, middle-class, Christian, able-bodied, thin, and heterosexual" subject (p. 304). By projecting these assumed qualities as the embodiment of an anti-oppressive ideal, silence or resistance are posited as qualities of the irrational and oppressed. For Ellsworth, critical pedagogy relies upon "repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination" (p. 298). In this way, as demonstrated by my opening narrative, the teacher-liberator, during the initial stages of the struggle of education, tends to oppress, particularly when met with the silence and resistance part and parcel of the critical classroom.

Psychoanalytic inquiry into the critical classroom takes up these feminist and postmodern critiques and offers up a lens of analysis that foregrounds the fragile, vulnerable work of education, prompting critical educators to "formulate theories of learning that can tolerate the human's capacity for its own extremes and its mistakes, resistance, belatedness, demands, and loss without creating more harm" (Britzman,

1998, p. 19). In doing so, it calls into question critical pedagogy's valuation of rationality and reason, and reveals the unconscious drives behind the educator's ideals. It introduces "territory beyond reason," the "territory of desire and identification, pleasure and play" (Janks, 2002, p. 9). A psychoanalytic inquiry into the critical classroom moves between psychic and social realities, implicating the identity and desire of the critical educator, and "interfering with education's dream of mastery" (p. 10). This is a particularly useful lens of analysis with which to call into question critical pedagogy and its belief in the superiority of rationality and logic. In the Literature Review, I will elaborate this discussion of the relationship between psychoanalysis and education, beginning with psychoanalysis within the research of the Frankfurt School, before theorizing how both education and psychoanalysis each became divided into two competing projects: the "therapeutic project," which seeks to cure illness/ignorance and the "emancipatory project," which acknowledges the unconscious desires and drives prompting our endeavors (Taubman, 2012, p. 26). With this discussion, I want to demonstrate how cure-driven enactments of critical pedagogy, such as the one introduced in my early anecdote, which promise empowerment and progress through the vehicle of reason, can result in "a programmed existence" (p. 2), one that forecloses a more reflexive approach foregrounding uncertainty, subjectivity, desire, and the heat of human relations in teaching and learning.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to use psychoanalysis as a lens to examine participants' autoethnographies, particularly how critical discourses are taken up and resisted, in order to generate multiple and competing definitions of what it means to be critical in the composition classroom. Through these participant-generated autoethnographies, both students' and my own, this project uses history-conscious narratives to connect the autobiographical or the personal to the cultural, social, and

political through means of self-reflection and analysis (Chang, 2008). This dissertation is, therefore, an anthology of literacy narratives and a meditation on how our literacy identities have been shaped in ways that continue to influence how we make sense of the demands of teaching and learning in the classroom. By infusing my research with personal narrative, I am better able to acknowledge the situatedness of my classroom observations and present research, including the connections between my story and the topic under study, critical literacy in the community college composition classes I now teach. Autoethnography as method, paired with a psychoanalytic method of analysis, allowed me to examine the narrative discourses through which I understand my own identity as a teacher of writing, including my identification with critical pedagogy, to offer up insight into the literacy lives and critical practices of my community college students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do participants use critical autoethnography to take up, resist, and embrace the critical lenses of the course?

2. In moments of resistance and cooperation, what are the psychodynamic tensions at play? For example, in what ways does my psychic involvement with students set up standards unrelated to the purportedly objective criteria of the curriculum?

3. In what ways is the 'critical' of critical autoethnography different from the 'critical' of critical pedagogy? Specifically, how is criticality redefined in the shift to a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography?

Self as Starting Point

As a means of grounding this project in my own identity development as a teacher, therefore, including my early identification with discourses of critical pedagogy--what it means "to be critical" and how discourses of critical pedagogy unconsciously figure into the various expectations, tensions, and resistances of my classroom--I share autoethnographic accounts of my own identity development at the start of each data chapter. The project then becomes autoethnographic in both process and product, culminating in this collection of literacy narratives, mine and my students,' interlaced to suggest the tangled, displaced, and personal ways we go about this messy work of the classroom. By opening each data chapter in my own autoethnographic accounts of identity development, I sought to 1) model the autoethnographic narratives I required my students to write, 2) explore how my own unconscious expectations of students' narratives have been shaped by my identity development as an academic, feminist, and critical educator, and 3) generate a self-reflexive discussion of issues of power, identity, and pedagogy, including an accounting of my own unconscious biases, expectations, and identity investments.

Autoethnography as method stood out to me as a researcher-teacher of community college students. Because community colleges serve a diverse and growing population of students—and disproportionately serve underrepresented ethnic minority groups and academically underprepared students—it was essential for me as a researcher to draw on students' ground-up narrative accounts of their literacy lives. Research shows that when underrepresented students, who frequently come to college expecting to fail, begin to believe in their innate capacity to learn and to become successful college students, the key factor is an individual, either in- or out-of-class, who "took an active interest in them…supported them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment" (Rendon, 1994, p. 23). Effective college environments for such students support the current identities of members, rather than trying to foist a new

identity upon them (Van Buskirk and McGrath, 1999). By having student-participants compose autoethnographic accounts of their literacy histories, they articulated the literacy practices in which *they* have invested, which in turn shaped my aim to meet them where they are as literacy learners in my composition class.

In the following section, I present a portrait of one morning early in this research as students began their own autoethnographic practices for my class by collecting and reflecting on various artifacts from their literacy histories. Focusing on Jack, a gamer and self-proclaimed "resistant reader," I demonstrate autoethnography's foregrounding of identity and desire, and its contextualizing of literacy within the broader backdrop of students' lives.

Contextualized Literacy Artifacts and Narratives

On a soggy April morning in 2009, students began to emerge from the stairwell and onto the third floor of Kenwood Community College, sodden shoes squeaking along the way. Carrying torn cardboard boxes, poster tubes, and brimming accordion files, they make a strange sight, looking more like bargain-hunters coming in from a rained-out garage sale than students on their way to my eight o'clock composition class. One student scales the stairs two-by-two carrying Neil Gaiman's graphic novel *The Sandman* on top of a stack of threadbare comic books. Another student follows on his heels, the Bible under his left arm and a binder of baseball cards in his hands.

At first glance, the nature of their collections appears arbitrary, each object telling an idiosyncratic, fragmented, and nonlinear story: a *National Geographic World Atlas for Young Explorers*, an old VHS tape with "Algeria vs. Brazil" scribbled on its side, a *Daily Iowan* newspaper, a *Final Fantasy* game cartridge, *Pride and Prejudice*, and a handwritten letter penned in elegant cursive. Students settle into small discussion groups and begin exchanging and reflecting upon each of their artifacts. I prompt them to be conscious of their histories, to make connections between their literacy practices

now and those of their pasts. This perplexes some students, who cannot see connections from one artifact to the next, and who express frustration with where this process is going and what it has to do with their writing and the requirements for the class (Fieldnotes, 2009). Others note contradictions and tensions within their own collections, citing artifacts that represent both an affinity for and a resistance to reading and writing at various points in their lives and in various contexts, both in and outside of school, horizon lines, materializing.

Here, in the spring of 2009, students' autoethnographies begin in narrative, in storytelling. Jack, a self-professed "resistant reader" and online gamer, has on his desk a game cartridge, a graphing calculator guidebook, and a technical textbook, *SQL Server 2005 for Developers*. He begins talking animatedly about *Final Fantasy*, the Nintendo game that "started it all for [him]" (Autoethnography, 2009, p. 1). At a very young age, Jack's two older brothers begrudgingly allowed him to sit in their laps while they played the game, occasionally allowing him to be a player as well. Eventually, by age four, Jack began to "read small, simple words on the screen," like 'armor,' 'fire,' 'iron,' and 'spells,' as well as the players' names, which could not exceed four letters: 'Aron,' 'Nick,' 'Jack,' and 'Dad' (p. 2).

Over the next year, he continued to play *Final Fantasy* with the help of his brothers; by the first day of kindergarten, Jack, in his own assessment, had a strong identity as a reader and would later do so well in kindergarten literacy assessments that he was able to "accumulate enough gold stars to create a fake night sky on [his] bedroom ceiling" (Autoethnography, 2009, p. 2). In first grade he was placed in an accelerated reading group, "feeding [his] little ego" and teaching him that school, like a videogame, was a system in which there were levels and rewards (p. 4). Yet in spite of Jack's success in school, by graduation he had learned to hate books and to see them as little more than a means to an end. Now, as a 19-year old college sophomore in my class, he considers himself a resistant reader, someone who sees books as obligations at

best, punishments at worst. He writes, "[I] was punished with literature. Unfortunately this does not mean I was hit with a book; it was much worse. I was made to read the entire thing" (p. 1).

Ultimately Jack comes to understand the "levels" of school and its rewards. In his autoethnography, he writes,

> When I realized I was able to read books and acquire rewards while doing it, the fact that I cannot stand reading books began to fade away in my mind and slowly was replaced with my fierce, competitive urges. In my reading group, I was maximizing my potential in school, and I was able to do just the same outside of school, tearing through sentences at age six to progress within the game. To the amazement of my brothers, I had completed the game before my school year was over.

> Looking back, I find myself caught between the notion that this was truly an accomplishment, something few others of that age could do, yet at the same time I have that voice in the back of my mind telling me how ridiculous all of it is, since it is a game, after all. (pp. 5-6)

Here the levels and rewards of two systems converge, making it unclear whether or not Jack is questioning the relevance of his success in videogames or in school. But in either case, it is a "game," one that belies his accomplishments within a potentially irrelevant system. His reflexive account demonstrates the transformational dimension of autoethnography, "one that asks us to slow down, to subject our experiences to critical examination, to expose life's mundane qualities for how they illustrate our participation in power" (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 103).

In the gathering and telling of his artifacts and literacy stories, Jack is doing autoethnography, composing texts that are written from the retrospective viewpoint of a person interpreting his own history (Vone`che, 2001). He is identifying what I've come to call horizon lines, positioning what Barton and Hamilton (2000) describe as "literacy events," "observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them" (p. 8), to make meaning of his current identity as a resistant reader.

I draw on Jack's process to demonstrate the autoethnographic turn, which, in this research, foregrounds identity formation through discourse, the ways in which individuals are organized and ordered within a given social context (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1978; Goffman, 1967; Rorty, 1989). In doing so, literacy learning is contextualized, meaning literacy is best understood as a set of practices embedded within both local and larger historical, social, and cultural contexts (Papen, 2005). Autoethnography enabled me to emphasize identity in context—and literacy as social practice-- by "bind[ing] together more closely the world we live in and the world we study" (Freeman, 2004, p. 73-74). Contrary to an "autonomous model" of literacy (Street, 1984), autoethnography stems from sociocultural approaches that posit literacy learning as multiple, complex, and dynamic practices grounded in specific purposes (Brandt, 2001; Gee, 2000; Moje and Luke, 2009; Yagelski, 2000). A person's interest in or ability to take up and enact these practices is a matter of identity, the learner's lived experiences, and how those experiences are brought to bear in any given literacy event. Autoethnography is but one way to account for that process.

Overview of Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature, I present a theoretical lay of the land, so to speak, to suggest that this research, a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography, grows out of 1) my ongoing pedagogical investment in critical inquiry in the composition classroom and 2) my ongoing frustrations with the ways that critical pedagogy can speak *for* rather than *with* students-- as demonstrated by this chapter's opening narrative-- by setting up specific demands on students' identity performances. Ellsworth (1989) refers to this as "discourses of disapproval," which demarcate the boundaries of dialogue, oftentimes in ways that reinscribe the unproblematized authority and identity of the teacher. At the end of the theoretical discussion of Chapter Two, I present psychoanalysis as a way of

implicating my own identity in the psychodynamics and identity demands of the classroom, suggesting the ways that psychoanalysis lends itself to a more thorough accounting of my own desires, "the failure of knowledge, the work of forgetting, the elusiveness of significance, the incidental, the coincident, the bungled action, and the psychic creativity of selves" (Britzman, 1998, p. 10). By pairing an autoethnographic method with a psychoanalytic method of analysis, I am able as a teacher-researcher to foreground how my own identity development and literacy history have shaped my identification with critical pedagogy and its cure-driven emphasis on crisis as means of identity transformation and doing critical work. Throughout this dissertation, I remind myself to move away from this heroic narrative of identity transformation and certainty, and toward open-endedness, ambivalence, and uncertainty of outcomes.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable.

Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I present four main theoretical backdrops that underpin this study: 1) I begin by discussing how this research is situated within a postmodern theoretical framework in its foregrounding of researcher subjectivity, including how autoethnography enabled me as a researcher to inhabit a self-reflexive, participatory position in my research; 2) After defining criticality within the context of critical autoethnography, I introduce a discussion of criticality as defined by discourses of critical pedagogy, including a brief overview of the literature of critical pedagogy from Freire to contemporary critical pedagogues, Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux; 3) I follow up this discussion with a review of postmodern and feminist criticisms of critical pedagogy and its emphasis on subject position over subjectivity (Janks, 2002), paternalistic discourses of disapproval that fail to implicate and problematize the authority and identity of the critical educator (Ellsworth, 1989), and the potential for a post-critical pedagogy grounded in feminism that encourages a more self-reflexive role for critical educators (Lather, 1999); and 4) I present psychoanalysis, first as a means of taking up the postmodern and feminist critiques of critical pedagogy and opening up a self-reflexive space in which the nonrational currents of desire can be not only accounted for but foregrounded, and finally tracing its present and historical connections to education, particularly the Frankfurt School and current cure-oriented enactments of critical pedagogy (Taubman, 2012). In the final section, I provide a

review of autoethnography, its theoretical underpinnings in anthropology and autobiographical ethnography, and how it has been used more broadly in research in education, sociology, and anthropology.

From Crisis To Critique

This research is situated within a postmodern framework in its emphasis on personal, reflexive, subjective experience over abstract, universal, and objective principles. Autoethnographic researchers are urged to analyze "their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process" (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 3). Reflective practice such as this aims to make visible the constructed nature of research outcomes, which "originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (p. 3). In choosing an autoethnographic method in particular, I wanted to theoretically frame this study in a way that would allow me to weave my own personal history of literacy learning alongside my students' narratives. In doing so, this study demonstrates the postmodern emphasis on subjective experience as the generative grounds of interpretation and meaning-making. It is only through my own subjective experience of the classroom—necessarily fallible, fragmented, and relative—that I can make sense of my approach to students' texts and their approaches to mine (assignments, emails, and discussion prompts).

Methodologically, the postmodern turn has led researchers to account for their own biases and to consider how any analytic move is necessarily refracted through the researcher's subjective perception. My aim in this study was to decenter my role as researcher by aligning my narrative alongside students' and, therefore, work against any kind of grand narrative that might otherwise present itself in a research study. This is similar in spirit to the "crisis in narratives" that has characterized postmodernity: a reconsideration of dominant ideas, leading to a rupture of grand, totalizing narratives (Lyotard, 1984). In the human sciences, for instance, a crisis of representation

characterizes how the disciplines of art, law, philosophy, and literature have reassessed the grand or "meta" narratives by which they were once organized (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 146). More specifically, in English and American literary criticism, for example, the decentering of metanarratives can be understood in terms of a movement away from New Criticism—the premise of which is that literature is, in essence, self-contained—to social and historical lenses of interpretation. The more objective lens of New Criticism has been complicated and opened up by postmodern interpretations that account for cultural and historical underpinnings of a text's production and reception, and for the politics of identity constituting reader response and author intentionality. The effects of this postmodern "crisis in narratives" can also be seen in the rupturing of positivism found in social theory and the dismantling of universal paradigms of justice and morality found in philosophy (Barthes, 1967; Cilliers, 1998; Hassan, 2001; Lyotard, 1984).

Contextual Considerations

In my own effort as a researcher to move away from totalizing theory and its goal of objectivity, the present study reflects the postmodern challenge in its move toward local considerations of contextuality, contingency, and performativity in students' literacy practices. Such a move was necessary to more fully account for how critical pedagogy runs the risk of speaking for rather than with students; the postmodern turn enabled me to implicate my own identity investments alongside my students.' Situated within social sciences, research in education, such as this, has made the postmodern turn toward more reflexive ethnographic research methods that challenge assumptions of any positivist social reality. Barton and Hamilton (1998) argue that "…literacy is the not the same in all contexts; rather, there are different literacies…That means that, within a given culture, there are different literacies associated with different domains of life" (p. 9). Robert Yagelski (2000) argues for a definition of literacy as

fundamentally *local*, a definition in which "literacy encompasses not only the specific circumstances of individual acts of writing and reading, but the identity of the writers and readers as well" (p. 60). This conception of literacy as local requires an accounting of both the social and individual aspects of literacy, as well as how specific texts "represent [students'] local acts of self-construction, attempts to write themselves into the broader discourses that shape their lives" (p. 93). Autoethnography as method also considers broader contexts than the local, such as larger historical, economic, and cultural contexts, thereby accounting for what Brandt and Clinton (2002) charge as the "limits of the local," including how social practice models of literacy can under-theorize certain aspects of literacy.

Through the means of critical autoethnography specifically, the students highlighted in this study tap into their own literacy practices and connect them to larger cultures. Culture, in this sense, is not a monolithic field but "a series of local or minoritarian representations organized by narratives: Culture as a site of inquiry is thus dissolved and expanded into a field of little narratives" (Readings, 1991, p. 85). This patchwork of "little narratives" constitutes culture as experienced by the students involved in this study and, ultimately, may work to interrupt the grand narratives in education that do not account for the unstable nature of language and meaning, the fragmented and contingent quality of the self, and the ways in which literacy learning is both individual and social in nature. More broadly, this means that my approach to researching and theorizing the literacy practices of community college students is not top-down but ground up: Students narrate and theorize their own literacy histories in the critical autoethnographies they wrote for my class. By keeping literacy portfolios with artifacts meaningful to them and culled from the context of their own unique literacy histories, *they* found artifacts rich in meaning. Later in this chapter, I will return to and elaborate on this discussion of culture and how it relates to autoethnography as research methodology.

Review of Literature

In our post-industrial, information economy, literacy is the currency that contributes most to the advancement of a nation (Brandt, 2001, p. 9). It is a resource within the U.S. economy that is exploited, measured, and bridled by larger political and economic forces, bringing into existence the kinds of access and obstacles shaping an individual's or a nation's profitability and economic edge (p. 9). As the largest and fastest growing institution of post-secondary education, community colleges specifically have become our nation's primary literacy sponsor, a key delivery system for the "economies of literacy, the means by which [economic and social] forces present themselves to--and through--individual learners" (p. 19). Recently positioned as the "economic engines" of the nation (Biden, 2012; Boggs, 2010), community colleges in particular demonstrate the complex ideological and economic underpinnings of literacy learning, including how literacy is defined, practiced, and valued within a particular national and local economy.

The 2010 White House Summit on Community Colleges reinforced the significant role of community colleges as literacy sponsors, deeply and complexly situated within the larger economic and social contexts that shape the conditions for literacy learning. This unprecedented event introduced a Mission Statement, including the goals of making America the most educated country in the world by 2020 and preparing college graduates to lead the 21st century workforce (White House Summit on Community Colleges: Summit Report, 2011). Perhaps not least of these goals was to introduce an expansion to an industry-led initiative, Skills for America's Future, which proposes to prepare 500,000 workers for innovative manufacturing jobs by partnering community colleges with The Manufacturing Institute. Like much of the American Jobs Act, the Skills for America's Future initiative heralds the community college-industry partnership as a means of educating our way to a better economy, largely through the promotion of job-placement and worker retraining programs

(Boggs, 2010). This commercial sponsorship from The Manufacturing Institute places an emphasis on economic and workplace needs through a skill-based curriculum, demonstrating the role of literacy in economic development, one that is closely tied to the investments of corporate capitalism. Unsurprisingly, the Skills for America's Future initiative bears significant shaping power in how the community college defines itself and literacy learning for its students. In its emphasis on ground-up, participant-generated definitions of literacy learning, this research is a response to the increasing federal and administrative pressure to promote standardized and skill-based curricula in the community college English classroom, oftentimes at the expense of creativity, risk-taking, and criticality.

The Monologic of Large-Scale Studies of Community College Culture

Grounding this study in autoethnography was my effort—as both a community college professor and former current community student-- to respond to the widely cited large-scale studies and outside agencies that characterize community college culture and its students in vastly dichotomized, totalized terms. In these studies, the little narratives comprising the researched—that is, community college classroom teachers and students-- and their lived experience are subsumed by broad, oftentimes contradictory, portraits of community college culture. On one end, much of this research continues to uphold community college culture and educational practices as indicative of its transformative, empowering potential as a literacy site (Boggs, 2010; Paddison, 2001; Shaw, 1997). In this body of research, descriptions of community colleges as "people's colleges" (Labaree 1997, p. 203; Rendon n.d., p. 1) or "democracy's colleges" (Brint and Karabel 1989, p. 205; Boggs, 2010; Shaw, Valadez, and Rhoads, 1999, p. 2) are common ways of describing their democratizing role in American culture. Statistics concerning the student population of community colleges demonstrate how the aims of diversity have been met through open-access admission

policies and multicultural educational environments affirmed and supported by the cultural responsiveness of community colleges (Bragg, 2001; Dowd, 2003; Laden, 1999; Valadez, 2002). Research into social and emotional capital demonstrates the "culture of support" that community colleges offer nontraditional and "at-risk" students (McGrath and Buskirk, pp. 34-35, 1999).

Yet existing alongside this portrait of the community college as transformative and supportive educational site is a host of educational research that describes the culture of community college as both antiacademic and remedialized (Bahr, 2008a; Bahr, 2008b; Dougherty, 1994; Hadden, 2000). Those offering up a negative critique of community college open admission policies argue that access is not synonymous with opportunity. According to Jenkins & Boswell (2002), eleven states have passed laws that prevent or discourage public four-year institutions from offering remedial courses, which is increasing the concentration of underprepared students in community colleges. In a 2007 article from *The New York Times*, Kay McClenney of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement characterizes remedial education as "job one" of the community college (p. 23, 2007). And yet, according to a recent study in Research in Developmental Education, 79 percent of remedial classes are taught by part-time faculty (Shults, 2000).

Many of these large-scale studies suggest remediation is a poor substitute for preparation, arguing that community colleges' culture of remediation comes at a high cost to students, taxpayers, and the larger American economy. For decades now, researchers of large-scale community college studies use the phrase "cooling out" to describe how community college education and career tracks devitalize the ambitions of working-class students (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Goffman, 2001; Rhoads and Valadez, 1996). In *The American Revolution*, a study of the rise to power of professional scholars and scientists, Jencks and Riesman (2001) argue that "one of the central functions of higher education…is to control access to the upper-middle social

strata," inasmuch as "demand for upper-middle class jobs and living standards far exceeds supply," thereby forcing institutions of higher education to "cool out" students whose "ambitions exceed their ability" (p. 99).

The Dialogic of Ethnographic Studies of Community College Culture

Less present, however, from the literature of large-scale studies is a clear portrait of a culture of academics at the community college. Within the ever-paradoxical ways of discursively constituting community college as culture of remediation or community college as site of cultural transformation, totalizing charges against its antiacademic climate hinge on nebulous assumptions of what it would mean for it to possess a truly "academic" atmosphere. National studies of remediation typically focus on overviews of program characteristics and quantifiable outcomes, such as exit scores and attrition rates (Harbour & Day, 2009; NCES, 2004; Porchea, et. al., 2010; Schuetz & Barr, 2008). Essentially, research has focused much more on program-level issues than classroom-level issues in such a way that an intimate examination of teaching and learning in the classroom falls by the wayside.

Largescale survey methods often fail to account for students' unique literacy histories, commitments to work and family, and, perhaps most important, the highly personal and dynamic transactions of the classroom. The monologic of these large-scale, oftentimes quantitative research studies overlooks the local acts of self-construction of the *researched*, oftentimes at the expense of arriving at a more nuanced analysis of the particularities of any one community college or classroom culture. And unsurprisingly, the contradictory characterizations of community college culture inform essentialized characterizations of the students therein. Back in the 1990's, London (1991) argued that students' enrollment in community college represents an attempt to improve their social status, a process inherently fraught with confusion of one's self-definition. McGrath and Spear (1991) concluded that the "fundamental distortion of

the academic function…a weakening of the practices of academic life" is the cause of community college students' potential "crisis of identity" (p. 11). In more recent years, similar criticism persist: Jaggars and Fletcher (2013) argue that community college students have many choices and little guidance in setting academic or career goals, creating confused and overwhelmed students.

The dialogic means of ethnographic research methods lend themselves to a more fine-grained understanding of the community college student and, consequently, community college culture. Postmodern theories that underscore the constructedness of social and cultural categories (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Butler, 1990; Denzin, 1992; Goffman, 1963) situate identity as unstable, dynamic, contextual, and largely contingent on differential power relations. Within this framework, identity is performative and, therefore, an act of positioning oneself: "there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law or origin'" (Hall, 1990, p. 226). In this way, rather than a singular, stable self, each person contains a multiplicity of identities, and each identity is constituted and reconstituted through "the prism of membership in one or more gender, race, or class category" (Shaw, 2001, p. 156).

In her four-year ethnographic examination of identity in eight urban community colleges, Shaw (2001) sought to understand the organizational culture that contributed to the relatively high transfer rate at the selected institutions. She found that when asked about their identities, students interviewed rarely described themselves in ways that represented a fully-constituted, stable self. She writes that in community college, the "interplay of assumed roles and social categories [of community college students] interact to produce an experience of identity that is multifaceted, situation-specific, and fragmented" (p. 153). Furthermore, she found that the "politics of difference"—the power implications of each of their identities—was acknowledged by each interviewee, and each discussed which identity components were derived from their relation to

power structures (race, class, gender), which they saw as intrinsic (self-esteem, motivation), and which were the result of individual agency (student, caregiver).

Unlike the students, however, some of the community college administrators and even instructors reflected essentialist notions of identity based on an "a-contextual, psychological notion of intrinsic characteristics—usually those related to success as a student" (p. 168). For instance, when asked why some students succeed or fail, intrinsic personality characteristics (motivation, goal-setting, and intelligence, for example) were cited. As a consequence, Shaw argues that under these identity constructs, students' experiences and needs were not understood within the power structures of the college; similarly, because student services were designed to help marginalized students "adapt" or assimilate to the dominant academic culture, difference was seen as a liability instead of a strength. In sum, contending identity constructs were at the heart of some community colleges' reinscription of power hierarchies.

Shaw's study demonstrates the ground-up, fine-grained little narratives made possible by ethnographic research methodology. While large-scale, program-focused quantitative studies provide useful information regarding trends in community college education, they are not well suited to present a clear portrait of the culture of community college. While it has been charged with an anti-academic atmosphere, it can only be assumed that what constitutes an academic atmosphere is grounded in outmoded criteria largely shaped by the dominant academic culture found on university campuses. It is the purposes of my study to offer a vision of community college culture through the little narratives of students' critical autoethnographies. For it is only through an understanding of community college students and their literacy histories that the culture of a particular community college classroom—or larger institution-- can be depicted.

The 'Critical' of Critical Autoethnography

In this study specifically, participants wrote critical autoethnographies that positioned their own literacy histories as a kind of text, one that they could read and interpret, ultimately arriving at their own definition of what it means to be literate within their larger local, cultural, linguistic, economic, and historical contexts. They were, in essence, to critically engage definitions of literacy that extended beyond the walls of the classroom and were more consciously situated within their own lives.

Later I discuss how this critical requirement of the assignment is directly related to the negative critique of critical pedagogy, but more broadly, the 'critical' in autoethnography, literacy, and pedagogy each share the basic premise that literacy requires the literate consumers of text to go beyond questions and concerns of word recognition and syntax to adopt a critical and questioning approach to texts (books, articles, films, websites, musical, or graphic). The layered, implied, or underlying meanings of texts are oftentimes positioned within the larger cultures that produced and received them.

Critical Pedagogy in Education

As I discussed earlier, what it means to be critical is relative, but as a researcher and teacher my own definition of critical can be traced through discourses of critical pedagogy, the project of which began with the neo-Marxian literature on critical theory (Stanley, 1992). Early critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School argued that Marxism had failed to thoroughly account for the ways that cultural and media influences work to reinforce the tenets of capitalism, that "maintaining conditions of ideological hegemony were important for (in fact inseparable from) the legitimacy and smooth working of capitalist economic relations" (Burbules & Berk, 2003). As institutional forces, systems of education were seen among other institutions that foster and perpetuate the myth of meritocracy through testing, tracking, and vocational or

college curricula (Apple, 1979; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Labaree, 2010; Popkewitz, 1991). Bowles and Gintis (1976) write,

> How can we best understand the evidently critical relationship between education and the capitalist economy? Any adequate explanation must begin with the fact that schools produce workers. The traditional theory explains the increased value of an educational worker by treating the worker as a machine. According to this view, workers have certain technical specifications (skills and motivational patterns) which in any given production situation determine their economic productivity. Productive traits are enhanced through schooling…schools foster legitimate inequality through the ostensibly meritocratic manner by which they reward and promote students…They create and reinforce patterns of social class. (pp. 10-11)

Essentially, systems of education were viewed as vehicles of the capitalist message that citizens in a capitalist society must know their "rightful" place within the larger economic order of society and must be reconciled to that order.

Critical pedagogy as a movement was a reaction against these institutionalized functions of schooling. It began as an effort to work within school to raise questions regarding issues of power, the myth of meritocracy, and the ideological indoctrination of students into particular value systems. Many proponents of critical pedagogy argued that through the ideology of school, students internalized belief systems to such a degree that they abandoned the impetus to question or challenge their place in the capitalist economy or Symbolic Order of relations.

Henry A. Giroux, Ira Shor, and Peter McLaren are the contemporary authors most commonly associated with furthering critical pedagogy's project of social change and collective action. Within the context of school settings, critical pedagogy is seen as a means of raising students' consciousness and ability to think critically, not merely as a kind of skill or particular disposition, but "the endeavor to teach others to think critically…[is] a consequence of pedagogical relations, between teachers and students and among students" (Burbules & Berk, 2003, p. 6). For writers and thinkers like Paulo Freire, consciousness-raising projects and concrete action are linked.

In his work promoting adult literacy in Latin American peasant communities, Freire argued for the development of *conscienticizao*, or critical consciousness, as a means of recognizing systems of oppression and one's place within that system (1970). This concept is grounded in Marxist projects of consciousness-raising: "the [Freirean] revolution's aim is to transform what Frantz Fanon terms 'the wretched of the earth' from 'beings for others' to 'beings for themselves,' a transformation that entails changing the conditions of material existence such as relations of ownership and control of labor" (Aronowitz, 1993, p. 13).

Critical pedagogy scholars cite such consciousness-raising projects as an essential means of facilitating students' awareness of the kinds of social relationships that undergird the very curricula found in school. Critical education works to politicize the work of the classroom. Giroux argues, "without a political project, there can be no ground on which to engage questions of power, domination, human suffering, and the possibilities of human struggle" (1992, p. 22). Critical perspectives account for the relationships among power, knowledge, and pedagogy in terms of how each works to construct the individual and collective identities of students. These politics of identity are always at play in discussions of teaching and learning in critical perspectives. In this way, pedagogy is scrutinized for its ability to provide the conditions necessary for marginalized students to reclaim their voices and their histories (p. 96).

Most important, the language of critique found in discourses of critical pedagogy must be linked to collective action, what Freire has called the liberatory praxis of the oppressed. For proponents of critical pedagogy, criticality requires that a person be moved to action. To merely reflect and interpret the world is insufficient if one is not also willing to change that world. Freire's focus on praxis as both reflection and action illustrates this tenet well: "Critical consciousness is brought about not through intellectual effort alone but through praxis—through the authentic union of action and reflection" (1970, p. 48).

The tradition of critical pedagogy demonstrates how claims of truth are part and parcel of systems of belief that have aggregated effects within power relations in society. Concerning systems of belief, the critical pedagogue will first ask, "Who is benefitting from this?" So in this way, assessments of truth are viewed for their partisan effects (Burbules & Berk, 2003, p. 2). Burbules and Berk write,

> Assertions that African-Americans score lower on IQ tests, for example, even if it is a "fact" that this particular population does on average score lower on this particular set of tests, leaves significant larger questions unaddressed, not the least of which is what effect such assertions have on a general population that is not aware of the important limits of these tests or the tenuous relation, at best, between "what IQ tests measure" and "intelligence." (p. 2)

Other questions the critical pedagogue might propose include: Who is making these claims? Why are they being made at this particular moment in history? How is this research funded? Criticality involves a questioning of assumptions that ultimately links to questions of social justice. This method of critical pedagogy involves "reading the world" as well as "reading the word" (Freire, 1970) through dialogic means. Dialogue is always situated within social relations between people, working to construct identity, not merely as a form of internal, individual thought or mode of critique. Critical pedagogues seek to illuminate the larger social context of dialogue-- though as I will discuss later in this review, the rationalist emphasis on dialogue (or the assumption that all students are equally positioned to enter into this abstract dialogue) oftentimes prioritizes Subject over subjectivity, leaving little or no room for resistance, silence, ambivalence, pleasure, or play in the critical classroom.

The consciousness-raising project of critical pedagogy is contingent on social emancipation. Individual criticality is ever-linked to social criticality (Giroux, 1988). Unlike critical thinking alone, which tends to address issues in isolation without situating them within larger social, historical, economic, or cultural contexts, critical pedagogy seeks to shed light on power-- and the way in which power informs and

reifies social relations-- by drawing on the larger context, a grander narrative, within which these issues are framed. For instance, the framework of critical race theory within the field of law takes to task the way the discipline of law has worked to sustain white supremacy, and, by extension, uphold similar hierarchies within gender, class, and sexual orientation. Legal scholars, among others, using critical race theory as a means of critique seek "to embrace a different race-consciousness, one that challenges the ways in which race is constructed and represented both in our society and in the legal system that helps to define it" (Isaksen, 2000, p. 696). Critical pedagogy upholds a view of social matters that is linked to larger frameworks of social justice, the dominant logic of capitalism, and manifestations of cultural and material oppression.

Critical Pedagogy in a Postmodern World

Criticisms of Critical Pedagogy

As I discussed early in the Introduction, a major criticism of critical pedagogy is that many of its assumptions are cloaked in abstractions (Ellsworth, 1992). Postmodern and feminist theorists in particular have problematized critical pedagogy and its propensity to speak for rather than with students. For instance, in "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits" (1999), Nicolas Burbules and Rupert Berk write that within critical pedagogy, "everything is up for questioning…except the categories and premises of Critical Pedagogy itself" (pp. 10-11). And notably, critical pedagogy's focus on cultivating a voice of and for the oppressed unearths questions concerning how any assumption of an "authentic" voice or history is problematic. Similarly, discourses of critical pedagogy run the risk of essentializing what it means for a student to possess a "true" or "liberated" consciousness. Notably, ideology in the classroom can be manifested by an instructor's unreflective assumption of students' self-evident knowledge, which oftentimes positions the critical educator as the possessor of knowledge to be imparted to the

students. In this way, critical pedagogy may become paternalistic in its praxis. The issue of voice, too, in student writing is of concern when assignments take forms that silence or circumscribe students' ability to demonstrate their knowledge. Truth is ideologically constructed in the academy, contingent on one having the will, the means, the opportunity, and the standing to have one's "claims accepted as credible": "to be recognized as a teller of truth requires basic authority, not only within oneself but, structurally, in contexts where both truth and credibility are not antagonistic" (Alexander, 2005, p. 122). If, at the outset, critical pedagogues position themselves as the keepers of knowledge and possessors of liberated consciousness, students will be silenced either by restrictive forms or hegemonic class discussions that reify the instructor's value system.

Perhaps the most obvious oversight in critical pedagogy is its focus on subject position over subjectivity, oftentimes at the expense of a more thorough (and ethical) accounting of students' nonrational desires, that "territory of desire and identification, pleasure and play, the taboo and the transgressive" (Janks, 2002, p. 9). For instance, Hillary Janks (2002) argues that critical literacy is essentially a rationalist project that does not address the nonrational investments that students bring to bear in any interpretation of text. Similarly, as discussed earlier, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1992) narrates how her own enactments of critical pedagogy led to "discourses of disapproval" that foreclosed the kind of emancipatory potential of critical inquiry in the classroom. She writes,

> But despite early rejections of the fundamental tenets of dialogue, including the usually unquestioned emancipatory potentials of rational deliberation and "unity," we remained in the grip of other repressive fictions of classroom dialogue for most of the semester. I expected that we would be able to ensure all members a safe space to speak, equal opportunity to speak, and equal power in influencing decisionmaking…It was only at the end of the semester that I and the students recognized that we had given this myth the power to divert our attention…we needed classroom practices that confronted the power dynamics inside and outside of our classroom that made democratic dialogue impossible. (p. 107)

Ellsworth cites the nonrational currents of the classroom, including fear of being misunderstood in discussions of race and gender, memories of bad experiences, anxiety about rendering oneself vulnerable in discussion, guilt and resentment concerning past experiences, and the demand that students of color felt to disclose more or to take on the burden of educating their white peers/professor about the consequences of white privilege, etc. as resistances left unaccounted for in discourses of critical pedagogy. Such discourses, continues Ellsworth, romanticize the potential for democratic dialogue and overemphasize rationalist projects that devalue the emotional undercurrent of any classroom. Ellsworth's critique unearths the ways that dialogue as a strategy provides an illusionary framework of equality in the classroom as the power imbalances between teacher and student remain intact. Furthermore, she argues, a teacher's identity is cloaked in unproblematized rhetoric concerning liberating students' consciousnesses in "pedagogically progressive" ways (Giroux as cited in Ellsworth, 1992, p. 98). Ellsworth takes to task the relativity of concepts such as "progressive" in ways that illuminate critical pedagogy's unexamined and paternalistic emphasis on "empowerment." In spite of its foundation in Freirean conceptions of problem-posing, dialogic education, critical pedagogy sometimes creates "discourses of disapproval" that demarcate the boundaries of dialogue, oftentimes in ways that reinscribe the unproblemized authority and identity of the teacher.

This oversight in critical pedagogy has been cited by feminist critics as one of the main ways that it excludes issues and voices from the classroom and in fact masks the paternal conversation of critical pedagogy. Patti Lather (1999) suggests a "post-critical" pedagogy grounded in a feminist reading that looks at "the sins of imposition that we commit in the name of liberation" (p. 129). Postmodern feminists have interrogated liberation models of critical pedagogy for their masculinist epistemology that acts as a site produced by men to serve themselves (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; Lather, 1984; Luke, 1992). Lather argues that practitioners of critical pedagogy must

turn the gaze back upon themselves, as oftentimes the consciousness-raising enterprises of critical pedagogy do not implicate their practitioners. While both Marxist and postmodern feminist perspectives share theories of political underpinnings and antifoundational critiques:

> [f]eminism displaces the articulation of postmodernism from the site of the fathers and opens up the possibility of a heteroglot articulation premised on multiplicities and particularities…feminism's long-running practices of self reflexivity…displace the hegemony of Marxism over Left discourses/practices. (Lather, 1994, p. 130)

Postmodernist feminist perspectives complicate and enrich critical perspectives by enacting practices of self-interrogation, "practice-based" theorizing, and "more situated and embodied discourses about pedagogy." Lather offers up a "post-critical pedagogy" that "foregrounds movement beyond the sedimented discursive configurations of essentialized, romanticized subjects with authentic needs and real identities…" (p. 131). Feminists critique critical pedagogy, arguing that there is no "innocent discourse of liberation," and that categories of identity should continue to be up for contestation, negotiation, and resistance. In this perspective, dialogue is complicated and viewed as "the goal of pedagogy" rather than a "condition for it" (Kenway & Modra, 1992, p. 163). To presuppose a pedagogy on the strategy of dialogue means constructing conditions for learning on rules that problematically assume that all students have an equal opportunity to speak. Postmodern feminist perspectives of dialogue demonstrate how critical perspectives of dialogue fail to account for the "dynamics of subordination present among classroom participants…in the form of multiple and contradictory subject positions" (Ellworth, 1992, p. 106).

Theories at the Intersection of Psychoanalysis and Composition

Within the field of composition theory, a number of writing scholars have taken up the possible relationships between psychoanalysis and the teaching of writing. For

instance, Ann Murphy (1989) explains these convergences between psychoanalysis and writing instruction as follows:

> Like psychoanalysis, our work helping students to find their voices frequently bring us face to face with a dense array of demons—fears, resistances, angers, and traumas—in our students and in ourselves. Indeed, the sub-text of latent content of a composition classroom often threatens utterly to overthrow the more cognitive dimensions of our work. In encouraging our students to unlock and express their ideas, feelings, and more effectively, we are, like psychoanalysts, insisting that they confront lost or denied elements of themselves. (p. 175)

Composition theorists, such as Murphy, explore the ways in which psychoanalytic theory offers teachers of composition frameworks for explanation-- via the dynamics of transference and resistance—of the subtext of a basic writing classroom. It can "help us understand the actualities of our students' behavior, both in class and on paper: their often inconsistent class participation; their unexpected writing blocks…their deeply personal reaction to us as teachers" (p. 182). Similarly, Lad Tobin (1991) discusses how, within the field of composition studies, writing specialists frequently

> admit that there is role-modeling, sexual tension, even transference, in the teaching of writing and the teacher-student relationship, but because these things make them uncomfortable (which they should) they deny their significance and suggest that we focus on the writing process and product as if it existed in a decontextualized situation and relationship. (p. 341)

While composition theorists like Tobin advocate a psychoanalytic accounting of how we read students' writing and navigate relationships with our writing students, there has been a kind of wariness on the part of composition theorists to take up a psychoanalytic pedagogy (Bracher, 1999; Tobin, 1991; Bishop, 1999). Theorists like Murphy, for example, limit psychoanalytic theory to providing consolation and insight for teachers as they grapple with students' acts of transference and resistance, rather than taking it up to guide them in their composition classroom practices (p. 182).

While my research does not take up the past literature where composition theory and psychoanalysis intersect, I do engage with the larger questions of these

intersections by complicating the ways that critical pedagogy can undermine a student's identity, how it confronts that student with evidence of the falseness of the student's identity investment. By articulating my own theory of a psychoanalytic pedagogy, I posit how the teacher, like the Lacanian analyst, can use the power of her authoritative position not to criticize a student's beliefs, investments, or values, but to help the student (and herself) to recognize the contingency of the student's and teacher's ego, and the presence of unconscious desires that underpin the classroom.

A Psychoanalytic Perspective of Teaching and Learning

In this research, I wanted to take up the postmodern and feminist criticisms of critical pedagogy while maintaining the critical component of my class. Therefore, as discussed in the Introduction, in this study I take up a psychoanalytic lens to analyze participants' autoethnographies, both students' and my own. I did so as a way to examine the psychodynamic tensions in teaching and learning, particularly those resistances to the critical lenses of the course, and to discuss the unconscious expectations students and teacher alike bring to the work of the classroom. Psychoanalysis, as the study of stories, enabled me to work through my own unconscious insistence on a specific narrative arc, a narrow and particular way of thinking about what it means to be critical, including how that expectation was rooted in my own particular identity development. In Chapter III, I will provide a more expansive discussion of the specific psychoanalytic concepts I used to frame data sources: identification, repetition, transference, and countertransference. Here I provide a brief overview of a psychoanalytic perspective of teaching and learning as it exists in previous literature.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, well-known Freudians and trained educators prior to becoming psychoanalysts—Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and August Aichhorn, for instance—saw the potential in psychoanalysis to reshape education

(Mayes, 2009, p. 543). They had hoped that teachers would receive psychological training, including their own psychoanalyses, to enable them to better teach and interact with students. In her "Four Lectures of Psychoanalysis for Teachers and Parents," Anna Freud (1974) writes that the educator, like the parent, needs to keep in mind that:

> the task of upbringing based on analytic understanding is to find a middle road between…extremes—that is to say, to find for each stage in the child's life the right proportion between drive gratification and drive control. (p. 128)

In this passage, Freud suggests a psychologically healthy and therapeutically savvy teacher could help students balance the "rapacious id and the unforgiving superego" (Mayes, 2009, p. 544). This precarious balance is, perhaps, at the heart of the educational enterprise. Students and teachers alike desire to protect and defend the identity-bearing knowledge and belief systems that they bring into the classroom, as well as often they desire recognition from one another as "intelligent" or as "a good student/teacher" or, in the case of this study, "a critical thinker" (Bracher, 2002). But the difficulty in education, one of three "impossible professions" (Freud, 1937), is that the classroom is fraught with multiple obstacles—those identity components and desires that run contrary to those motivating and directing the educational enterprise, the result of which can be counterproductive to learning.

Psychoanalysis in the Frankfurt School

Critical theorists, such as Habermas, took up the psychoanalytic accounting of desire and self interest in theories of knowledge. In *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1968), for instance, Habermas argues that there can be no objective knowledge, as "humans have an interest in [it] insofar as such interest is attached to the preservation of self-identity" (Corradetti, 2011). Here, the connections between psychoanalysis and education are particularly present in the relationship between psychoanalysis and critical theory. In the Frankfurt School, psychoanalysis offered up a reinterpretation of Freud and Marx. This is clear in the works of Marcuse, for instance, who took up

Freud's theory of instinctual needs in order to interpret the interest genealogy at the basis of capitalist ideology (Corradetti, 2011).

Both psychoanalysis and education contain within them a particular relationship to rationality as well. Critical pedagogy's valuation of rationality can be traced back to critical theory and its emphasis on rationality as an essential theme in its analysis of modern society. For the early Frankfurt School and for Habermas, rationality was viewed "as a historical process whose unity was taken as a precondition for social criticism" and the primary vehicle of human emancipation (Coradette, 2011). And as discussed earlier, education connected to the social justice agenda, such as critical pedagogy, contains within it "a belief in the power and superiority of rationality and logic" (Taubman, 2012, p. 26).

Similarly, within psychoanalysis, too, is a strain that is committed to reason as a means to a cure. E.A. Levinson (1994) deciphers a difference between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, the latter which is pragmatic and goal or cure-oriented, and the former, which "intends to fail the patient's hope for a magical cure, force him/her to fall back on his or her own resources and begin to arrive at his or her own construction of the world" (p. 703). He continues,

> Psychoanalysis doesn't work in the same way as psychotherapy which works by providing the patient with a coherent overview, a blueprint for making changes. If changes work, they reinforce more change. Psychoanalysis works by failing the patient's expectations of a master helper. The patient is thrown back on his/her resources and discovers, to his/her amazement, that there is…a deep river of awareness, which he/she can tap into and use. (p. 704)

What I want to emphasize in Levinson's distinction between psychotherapy and psychoanalysis is that the latter does not aim to cure patients; the role of the analyst is to "get out of the way of the patient's flow of consciousness" (p. 705). This distinction for me in an important one, as the cure-oriented focus of psychotherapy, which is driven by whatever the *therapist's* idea of a cure is, parallels the aforementioned

criticisms of critical pedagogy, its over-reliance on logic and reason, and the repressive ways it fails to implicate the desires and identity investments of the teacher, as well as the subjectivities of the students. Can critical pedagogy—or education more broadly—be psychoanalytic? Can a psychoanalytically-informed critical autoethnography resist the goal-oriented demands of critical pedagogy?

In his recent book *Disavowed Knowledge* (2012), Peter Taubman traces a similar "split" in education, "caused by its own disavowal of what it knows" (p. 24). One of the ways education has done this has been in its pursuit of scientific certainty, particularly in the last thirty years of increasing standards and accountability (p. 25). He calls this split—in both psychoanalysis and education—the "therapeutic project," whose goals are "*caritas*--a presupposed knowledge of what is good for the soul coupled with a love for humankind, and *logos*—a belief in the power and superiority of rationality and logic and that the real *is* rational and the rational *is* real" (p. 26). Further,

> The therapeutic project places the student or patient at the center of all its efforts, and sets as its sole criterion for success the positive change in both…Teacher and analyst are intent, with or without the patient's or the student's full agreement, on moving the patient or student toward health, academic achievement, or a social conscience. (pp. 26-27)

On the other side of this split is what Taubman calls the "emancipatory project," which "focuses on all the ways we make sense of or try to understand our experiences, no matter how trivial or traumatic…[and] aspires to…loosen the psychic knots and intellectual ruts we find we are stuck in, and to broaden and deepen the meanings we make of our experiences" (p. 28). In this project, the teacher/analyst and student/patient are both at the center of its efforts, as perception and knowing are necessarily refracted through each participant's idiosyncratic subjectivities and "through a relationship fraught with unconscious desires and shadows from the past" (p. 28).

In this research, through participant-generated autoethnographies that are analyzed through the lens of psychoanalysis, my aim was to work against the ways that enactments of critical pedagogy can become cure-oriented and, in doing so, ultimately repressive. I think back to my childhood of teaching at Mountain Creek Correctional Facility, where I looked to students' narratives as evidence of critical consciousness, considering such narratives as having met the goal of the class, *my* goal for students' politicized narratives. Psychoanalysis gives me the language and framework with which to understand how that curriculum—and the demands and foreclosures it placed on students' identities—was wrapped up in my *own* need to be recognized as a particular type of teacher, to see a stark and uninterrupted horizon line. In this research I introduce a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography to recognize my own psychic undercurrents shaping the dynamics of the classroom, the unconscious demands those undercurrents place on my students' narratives, and how an accounting for my own identity investments might give rise to new ways of defining what it means to be critical in the composition class. In the final section of this chapter, I present critical autoethnography as a ground-up, participant-generated method of doing critical inquiry, one that responds to some of the criticism of critical pedagogy as expressed by postmodern and feminist theorists, and one that gives rise to a multiplicity of identities without foreclosing particular identity components.

Critical Autoethnography as Response

The potential pitfalls of universalizing and essentializing assumptions of critical pedagogy have been well argued through postmodern and feminist frameworks. Perhaps one of the most useful criticisms located within postmodernism is the poststructural examination of how the tradition of critical pedagogy is situated within a particular historical context as a discursive system with specific social effects (Cherryholmes, 1988; Gore, 1993). As cited earlier, this contemporary crisis of

postmodernism or challenge to metanarratives is a key means of examining the effects of how grand narratives frame the world—how claims of universality, inclusiveness, or objectivity characterize positions within critical pedagogy itself.

Akin to Lather's advocacy of a "post-critical pedagogy," Burbules and Berk (2003) posit an "alternate criticality," consisting of tenets of postmodern thinkers' push to question and doubt our own presuppositions, the "ones without which we literally do not know how to think and act" (pp. 15-16):

> This seemingly paradoxical sort of questioning is often part of the process by which radically new thinking begins: by an aporia; by a doubt that we do not know (yet) how to move beyond; by imagining what it might mean to think without some of the very things that make our (current) thinking meaningful. Here, we have moved into a sense of criticality well beyond the categories of Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy; to the extent that these traditions of thought and practice have become programmatic, become "movements" of a sort, they must be less able—and less motivated—pull up their own roots for examination. (pp. 15-16)

In a similar critique, Gur-Ze'ev (1998) proposes a "non-repressive" version of critical pedagogy that draws on poststructural thinkers like Foucault, who "enlighten the all-penetrating presence of powers and conditions that constitute the human being, the conditions of his/her production, his/her possibilities and limitations" (n.p.). Both perspectives encourage a counter-education to hegemonic education, including the dogmatic and stagnant elements of critical pedagogy.

In my own attempt to move toward the little narratives that work to illuminate meaning from a local, contextual standpoint, I have turned toward poststructuralism's emphasis on multiple and interdependent discourses. Through means of critical autoethnography specifically, multiple and shifting subjectivities can emerge. Linda Brodkey (1996) writes,

> We can only hope to transform a hegemonic practice with a narrative that insists on interrupting a story told in a classroom or in the academy that has acquired that status of lived experience, reality, logic, science, or any other seemingly unassailable stories that have acquired the status of authoritative discourse. The

only way to fight a hegemonic discourse is to teach ourselves and others alternative ways of seeing the world and discussing what it is we have come to understand as theory, research, and practice. (p. 113)

Critical autoethnography as a research method challenges the universalizing proclivities found in critical pedagogy by illuminating these "alternative ways of seeing the world" (p. 13). It draws our attention to the ways that language and reality are dependent upon one another, that "words constitute worldviews, and hence…any attempts to describe reality are necessarily partial accounts…limited by what can be seen and understood from a particular vantage point" (Brodkey, 1996, p. 159). Critical autoethnography as method enables student-researchers to account for both their subject and subjective positions in ways that still uphold the negative critique of critical inquiry, yet without foreclosing the kinds of identities and desires allowed into the sphere of the critical classroom. Hickey and Austin (2007) argue that "Autoethnography opens up possibilities for the development of a critical reflexivity wherein senses of Self and agency might come to be understood in terms of the social processes that mediate lived experience" (p. 21).

In her study, "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Reconceiving Remediation," Mary Soliday (1996) takes to task opponents of remediation by suggesting how remedial education, when responsive to the experiences and histories of nontraditional and marginalized students, can support remedial writers who are eventually mainstreamed into college courses. In her own three-year mainstreaming project in the remedial writing program at the City College of New York, she developed and executed a remedial course thematically centered on linguistic self-consciousness by exposing students to the kind of intellectual inquiry associated with a liberal arts education.

Through means of critical autoethnographic projects focused on students' own linguistic patterns, Soliday traces how students from diverse backgrounds were supported throughout her course in such a way that instruction was not torn '"between

the need to make haste and the need to teach the ABC's of writing in adult ways',"
(Otheguy as cited in Soliday, 1996, pp. 96-97). By focusing on students' lived literacy histories and a particularly fine-grained analysis of one focal student's portfolio progress, Soliday's study demonstrates the kind of intellectual rigor possible in "remedial" writing programs. Indeed, the critical ethnographic project is ideally suited for diverse student populations with border knowledge not always accounted for and validated in traditional academic settings.

Anderson and Irvine (1993) define critical ethnography as the individual instructor's conscious search for question-based classroom methods that seek to unearth the inequalities of privilege that permeate and are sustained by school curricula and pedagogical enactments. Critical literacy is at the heart of critical ethnography:

> Critical literacy, then, is learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations. The goal of critical literacy...is to challenge these unequal power relations. (Anderson and Irvine, 1993, p. 82)

John Paddison (2001) discusses classroom applications of critical ethnography, including a series of questions instructors might pose to students: "What was the economic foundation for those students that went on to universities? What are the dynamics of tracking and honor programs, and what are the implications?" (p. 93). In *auto*ethnographic methods, however, student-generated, rather than instructor-generated, methods of inquiry are made. Linda Brodkey (1996) describes the "critical narrators" of critical ethnographies as follows:

> Critical narrators, then, are narrators whose self-consciousness about ideology makes it necessary for them to point out that all stories, including their own, are told from a vantage point, and to call attention to the voice in which the story's being told. In critical narratives, it is from the narrative stance or conceptual vantage point of critical theory that a story of cultural hegemony is generated. That means that the events related have been conceptualized by a narrator who sees, organizes, interprets, and narrates social events in terms of critical theory. (pp. 109-110)

Through means of critical autoethnography, students offer up alternative ways of seeing, ways that interrupt and complicate dominant narratives of educational access. Critical autoethnography enables students not only to understand how schools can be powerful sites of cultural reproduction and hegemony, but also to interrupt those problematic social practices that oppress certain ways of knowing and speaking in the classroom.

Brandt (2001) emphasizes the importance of "fine-grained explorations of out-of-school literacy practices" for their ability to demonstrate "the complex social and cultural orchestrations that even the simplest acts of reading and writing entail. They also invite interrogation into the implications of literacy in the maintenance of racism, sexism, and other undemocratic interests" (p. 8). In light of the contradictory characterizations of community college culture and the students therein, a more contextualized perspective of community college students' literacy practices must be generated. The work of critical autoethnography—its focus on critical frameworks and multiple and hidden literacies—expands and democratizes perspectives on literacy.

Critical pedagogy cites such consciousness-raising projects as an essential means of facilitating students' awareness of the kinds of social relationships that undergird the very curricula found in school by accounting for the interrelatedness of power, knowledge, and pedagogy in terms of how each works to construct the individual and collective identities of students. These politics of identity are always at play in discussions of teaching and learning in critical perspectives. In this way, pedagogy is scrutinized for its ability to provide the conditions necessary for marginalized students to reclaim their voices and their histories.

For instance, theories of critical pedagogy find connections between education and the role of the citizen. Henry A. Giroux, an advocate of critical pedagogy, argues that "schools are the major institutions for educating students for public life…schools should function to provide students with the knowledge, character, and moral vision

that build civic courage" (1992, p. 18). In this way, critical education rigorously accounts for how school, as an institution, runs the risk of perpetuating social and economic hierarchies. This reproductive theory cites school as a major site of economic and cultural reproduction.

And so while autoethnography is inherently critical in the way it challenges positivist assumptions of truth and objectivity in research methodology, I chose to emphasize its critical role by having students write critical autoethnography specifically. In naming and foregrounding the critical component of the writing assignment, I encouraged students to politicize their narrative experiences, question how their literacy identities were shaped by larger contexts (economic, social, cultural, etc.), and seek out the multiple, underlying meanings of their literacy artifacts through weekly portfolio reflections.

As discussed in the Introduction, at the heart of this research is the question of identity formation, how it is born out of crisis, and what kinds of demands critical pedagogy makes of student and teacher identities in the critical classroom. It was therefore at the outset that my own identity as a critical pedagogue was implicated in this research, including my early identification with the self-actualized, radicalized educators in discourses of critical pedagogy and how that identification set up a series of transferences and countertransferences in the classroom. It became necessary then to take a recursive approach to this research by first narrating and then theorizing my early investment in critical pedagogy, particularly its prioritization of identity transformation. I needed to go back in time and reconstruct my own early crises of identity, exploring the arc of my own narratives of transformation, before I could come back to my students and theirs. As I discussed in my Introduction, by infusing my academic work with personal narrative, I was better able to acknowledge the situatedness of my classroom observations and present research, including the connections between my story and the topic under study, critical inquiry in the English classes I now teach.

Questions of identity formation and transformation are equally located in both personal and cultural realms, and so critical autoethnography became the obvious method to approach my narratives as data sources as well as those of my students, examining the interconnectedness of them and their situatedness in the larger class culture. The set-up of the study then created a kind of conversation among the various narratives and emergent identities. I characterize my analytical process as a recursive one that continually led me back to my own early experiences with teaching, learning, and identity development in an attempt to move forward again, to make sense of my students' experiences. The project then became autoethnographic in both process and product, culminating in this collection of literacy memoirs, mine and my students,' interlaced to suggest the tangled, displaced, and personal ways we go about this messy work of the classroom. Pillow (2000) argues that critical autoethnography creates a dialogue in which "researchers discuss the politics of their research, how they understand power relations, and how these understandings are then performed in the text" (p. 23). In essence, autoethnography opened up a space for me to become a critically reflexive participant, thereby "forcing a critical examination of the act of conducting research of the self in relation to one's community," in this case, our class community (Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012, p. 210).

A Review of Autoethnography

We are in the midst of a renewed interest in personal narrative, in life history, and in autobiography among anthropologists. The changing nature of fieldwork in a post-colonial and postmodern world, in tandem with new theoretical trends in anthropology since the 1980s, have, however, meant that studies of life stories and personal narratives are informed by different questions than were earlier approaches.

Reed-Danahay, Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social

While autoethnography's roots in anthropology can be traced 50 years back (Patton, 2002; Spindler, 1963), over the past two decades, researchers in education have

witnessed an increasing number of references to 'autoethnography' in research articles, books, and dissertations (Delamont, 2007; L. Anderson, 2006). Perhaps unsurprisingly, its increased presence has instigated an epistemological and methodological shift to interpreting research "as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010, para. 9). When I first sat down to analyze my students' autoethnographies, including the various narrative arcs that shape them and the ways they internalized, resisted, and subverted the curriculum, it felt unethical to try to make any sense of them without also implicating my own forms of resistance and identification in the broader culture of the class. Critical autoethnography opened up the possibility of me positioning myself alongside my students and their experiences by drawing on my own identity development in the same kinds of narratives I asked of them.

My desire to inhabit a self-reflexive, participatory position in my research reflects a growing concern with how educational research has been done in the past. An increased presence of autoethnography and narrative inquiry in qualitative research suggests a larger concern about how the style of academic writing shapes the types of claims made. For many qualitative researchers, experimenting with alternative forms of writing and analysis-- including autoethnography, personal narrative, and layered accounts-- enables and gives shape to nuanced and multiple accounts of a research study, prompting not only the opportunity to create new, provocative claims but also the ability to do so in an engaging way. Ellis (2004) writes that autoethnography challenges "the conventions of literary writing and expression" by opening up form and style to include "concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot" (p. xix), all qualities present in the classroom, warranting this approach in the case of my study.

More broadly, autoethnography is a contested field and oftentimes used interchangeably with personal narrative or autobiography. While it has been used for

over two decades in the fields of literary criticism and anthropology, it includes

"multiple meanings" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 4). Even in this study, at times I refer to

students' autoethnographies as "literacy memoirs" in order to emphasize the careful act

of reconstruction and incorporation of literary devices involved in this genre of writing.

Autoethnographic methods include journaling, interviewing oneself, and using

narrative writing to generate cultural understandings, as is the case in this specific

study. The forms of autoethnography vary as well, including traditional/scholarly

journal articles and books; performance pieces on the stage or other artistic media,

including painting, collage, and installation; and journalistic pieces in popular print.

The Role of the Autoethnographer

One of the main qualities of autoethnographic research is that the

autoethnographer is a boundary-crosser, experiencing a multiplicity of identities, which

is characteristic of the larger postmodern context out of which it emerges. In

autoethnography, the researcher's desire to unearth and account for the worldview of

others reflects a postmodern stance in which there is no monolithic Truth, and multiple

viewpoints are acknowledged and valued. In this way, tantamount to autoethnography

is the recognition of the researcher as representative of a multilayered reality, itself

worthy of expression. Anthropologist Deborah E. Reed-Danahay (1997) writes,

> While recently enjoying much currency in anthropology, literary criticism, and
> post-colonial studies more generally, this notion of double identity is not new.
> It is associated with late nineteenth-century ideas of "double consciousness" and
> has been central to African-American thought…The notion of autoethnography
> forgerounds the multiple nature of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing
> about social life…, one stressing multiple, shifting identities. (p. 3)

One of the ways the autoethnographer reflects this postmodern understanding of

identity as multiple, dynamic, and socially constructed is in her shift from a

depersonalized, neutrally distanced narrative to a storyline with which the reader can

engage aesthetically and intellectually. Especially in research including multiple

informants—multiple and layered narratives, autoethnography introduces an alternative way of writing through which the distinction between ethnographer and 'others' is unclear, thereby challenging assumed and contrived identity boundaries between researcher and participants. In my study, my own introductory narratives bear as much weight as those of my students, and I talk across them to underscore their connectedness.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Autoethnography

Autoethnography is located at the intersection of three genres of research and writing: 1) native anthropology, writing in which people who were previously the participants of studies become the authors of studies about their own native group; 2) ethnic autobiography, which is personal narrative written by members of ethnic minority groups, and 3) autobiographical ethnography, writing in which anthropologists weave their own reflexive and personal experiences into their ethnographic research (Reed-Danahay, 1997). It emerged in anthropology in the 1960s (Patton, 2002, pp. 132-133) and is rooted in anthropological methodology and purposes. It has emerged in the United States as a way for researchers to ask questions like: "How might my experience of identity (race, class, gender, education, or religion) inform approaches to pedagogy?" (Hughes, et al., 2012, p. 210). In this study, a very similar question underpins each of the data chapters, which, as mentioned previously, opens in a narrative moment of my own identity development, crisis, and transformation.

In *Autoethnography as Method* (2000), Chang writes that a "difference between ethnography and autoethnography at the initial stage is that autoethnographers enter the research field with a familiar topic (self) whereas ethnographers begin their investigation with an unfamiliar topic (others)" (p. 50). Yet like ethnography, autoethnography is a means of arriving at an understanding of the culture underlying the researcher's autobiographical experiences. When researchers write

autoethnographies, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies or notable moments from their past that are connected to a larger culture and/or cultural identity.

Unlike ethnography, a research method used in sociology, education, and anthropology, autoethnography invites and even foregrounds the researcher's subjectivity rather than attempting to mask or omit it, as it often done in quantitative, empirical research; the essential difference being that in an autoethnography, the researcher is not trying to become an insider in the research setting: She is the insider. The context is her own. While there were times when writing these narrative vignettes that it felt indulgent, autoethnographers are themselves the primary subject (participant) of the research in the process of writing personal narratives. Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe this method as follows:

> Social scientists recently have begun to…write evocative personal narratives specifically focused on their academic as well as their personal lives. Their primary purpose is to understand a self or some aspect of a life lived in a cultural context…Readers, too, take a more active role as they are invited into the author's world, evoked to a feeling level about the events being described, and stimulated to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives. (p. 742)

For instance, in this research, I weave vignettes of my own literacy history alongside the literacy narratives of my students as a way of illuminating my whole interaction with the social context of the research setting. Although some social scientists still assume that research can have its origins in a neutral, objective, and impersonal place, "many more of us now recognize that such an assumption is challenging to defend because of the difference that can emerge from race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, class, education, and/or religion" (Hughes, et al., 2012, p. 210).

Theoretically, this approach to research is quite different from the hypothesis-driven methods of positivist epistemology in that autoethnography works against the false dichotomy of research/researched, self/other, objectivity/subjectivity, and

personal/political. In this way, autoethnographic methodology is aligned with the

social constructivism of postmodern theories of identity as contextual, relative, and

dynamic. Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997), anthropologist, argues that autoethnography

is a postmodernist construct:

> The concept of autoethnography…synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography,
> in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard
> ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography,
> in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into
> question. The term has a double sense - referring either to the ethnography of
> one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest.
> Thus, either a self- (auto-) ethnography or an autobiographical (auto-)
> ethnography can be signaled by "autoethnography." (p. 2)

Autoethnographers, therefore, tend to reject the concept of research as neutral,

objective knowledge produced by scientific methods. And so in this way,

autoethnography is a critical "response to the alienating effects on both researchers and

audiences of impersonal, passionless, abstract claims of truth generated by such

research practices and clothed in exclusionary scientific discourse" (Ellingson & Ellis,

2008, p. 450).

An autoethnography is a personal, self-reflexive account of one's own

experiences situated within a particular social, cultural, historical, or linguistic context.

In other words, in addition to describing and looking critically at one's own experience,

an autoethnography is also a cultural practice. In *Starting with Self: Teaching

Autoethnography to foster critically caring literacies*, autoethnographer Patrick

Camangian (2010) discusses the impact of his students' autoethnographies, which acted

as cultural narratives among youth of color. The findings of the study suggest that,

through autoethnography, students increased self-knowledge and, in the process of

doing, so humanized "Black and Brown students' understanding of one another by

healing the various perceived differences they experience within their social contexts"

(p. 179). Notably, students situated their personal experiences within the larger

historical and cultural contexts that have shaped their experiences of alienation, internalized oppression, and collective division, demonstrating how autoethnography simultaneously promotes self and social reflection.

Throughout this study, I use personal, self-reflective narrative to challenge the assumption of a positivist social reality and to account for my own investment in critical literacy, which ultimately shaped how students approached the task to be critical in my composition class. I organize each data chapter of this study by beginning in personal narrative, introductory vignettes, before turning to self-reflective response and data analysis (using psychoanalysis) in order to acknowledge and theorize how my own subjectivity as a critical educator was shaped early on in my experiences of teaching, learning, and identity formation. This study is, therefore, autobiographical in its content orientation and ethnographic in its methodological orientation.

Critical autoethnography as a research method enabled me and my students to generate fine-grained, contextualized, and contingent narratives that illuminated the historical, social, cultural, linguistic, and economic backdrops of our literacy practices and histories. Students and I engaged in Anderson's (2006) theoretical and reflexive approach to autoethnography in which the autoethnographer: 1) is "a complete member in the social world under study" (p. 379); 2) engages reflexivity to analyze data on self; 3) is visibly and actively present in the text; 4) includes other informants in similar situations in data collection; and 5) is committed to theoretical analysis. In addition to this analytical emphasis, students' critical autoethnographies also reflect Ellis and Bochner's (2006) description of autoethnography as "evocative" and emotionally engaging. They define autoethnography as "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with the cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (2006, p. 742). While autoethnography should not be regarded as a monolithic approach, it

varies in method from performance (Spry, 2011) to symbolic interactionism (Anderson, 2006). And in this particular research, autoethnography takes narrative form.

Critical Autoethnography and the Culture of a Classroom

Critical narrators are narrators whose self-consciousness about ideology makes it necessary for them to point out that all stories, including their own, are told from a vantage point, and to call attention to the voice in which the story is being told. In critical narratives, it is from the narrative stance or conceptual vantage point of critical theory that a story of cultural hegemony is generated. That means that the events related have been conceptualized by a narrator who sees, organizes, interprets, and narrates social events in terms of critical theory (Brodkey, 1996).

Anderson and Irvine (1993) define critical ethnography as the individual instructor's conscious search for question-based classroom methods that seek to unearth the inequalities of privilege that permeate and are sustained by school curricula and pedagogical enactments. Critical literacy is at the heart of critical ethnography: Critical literacy, then, is learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations. The goal of critical literacy is to challenge these unequal power relations. John Paddison (2001) discusses classroom applications of critical ethnography, including a series of questions instructors might pose to students: "What was the economic foundation for those students that went on to universities? What are the dynamics of tracking and honor programs, and what are the implications?" (p. 93). In autoethnographic methods, however, student-generated, rather than instructor-generated, methods of inquiry are made. Through means of critical autoethnography, students offer up alternative ways of seeing, ways that interrupt and complicate dominant narratives of educational access.

Critical autoethnography enables students not only to understand how schools can be powerful sites of cultural reproduction and hegemony, but also to interrupt those problematic social practices that oppress certain ways of knowing and speaking in the classroom. Specifically, it has been through the work of critical autoethnography that both I and my students have illuminated the ideological underpinnings of my own pedagogy, including how the demands of critical inquiry oftentimes speak for rather than with students, how the critical classroom runs the risk of reproducing power/knowledge hierarchies, and how the process of autoethnography can act as an interruptive practice in which students acknowledge their multiple subject positions, ultimately challenging the presumed neutrality of any class or writing assignment, including my own.

Brandt (2001) emphasizes the importance of "fine-grained explorations of out-of-school literacy practices" for their ability to demonstrate "the complex social and cultural orchestrations that even the simplest acts of reading and writing entail. They also invite interrogation into the implications of literacy in the maintenance of racism, sexism, and other undemocratic interests" (p. 8). In light of the contradictory characterizations of community college culture and the students therein, a more contextualized perspective of community college students' literacy practices must be generated. The work of critical autoethnography—its focus on critical frameworks and multiple and hidden literacies—expands and democratizes perspectives on literacy.

As mentioned in the earlier, national studies focusing on program-level issues fail to account for the classroom-level issues present in community college writing classrooms. These macro-level analyses of quantifiable outcomes, such as exit scores and attrition rates, provide the basis for what later critics of the community college have come to call its "culture of remediation" (Mansfield and Farris, 1991; Piland and Pierce, 1989). 'Culture,' in this case, is not so much defined by the particular

behaviors, customs, and beliefs characteristic of a specific school or classroom site, but rather a sweeping, large-scale overview of the trends of a particular demographic.

In order to generate a clearer understanding of community college culture and the writing programs therein, multiple methodologies, including qualitative approaches that include more fine-grained, microanalyses, must be included. For the purposes of this study, Geertz's (1973) definition of 'culture'--the dialectic exchange between individuals and organizations, resulting in a complex culture that is continuously revised through its interactions-- will inform my methodological approach. This definition accounts for postmodern and critical frameworks that challenge any conception of culture assumed *a priori*; power, conflict, tension, and resistance are essential dimensions of any culture and its heterogeneity.

This understanding of culture as relative, contextual, and heterogeneous acts as a tool for data collection and interpretation, but not as a definitive conclusion. According to Perusek (2007), cultural relativism is situated "at the intersection between observation and participation, enabling us to develop an empathetic understanding of one another—both in the field and in everyday life" (Feinberg, 2007, p. 785). Unlike the macro-level quantitative inquiries into culture, it is my aim to generate a more intimate portrait of the community college writing classroom and the dialectic psychic transactions therein.

Overview of Chapter Three

In Chapter Three, Research Methodology and Design, I begin in a narrative of my own personal connection to community colleges and community college students to demonstrate a reflexive awareness of my work as a teacher and researcher in this particular literacy site. At the end of Chapter Three, I return to my opening narrative to discuss the psychodynamics informing the original assumptions and biases underpinning the early drafts of this dissertation, including its original research

questions and methodology. In short, again and again, in my early drafting of this research, I ran up against myself: "Psychoanalysis insists, those investments, one's family, and the intimate dead, however irrelevant they may seem to one's scholarship, are always pressing close" (Taubman, 2012, p. 3). Throughout Chapter Three, I implicate my own unconscious investments and desires in the framing of this research methodology and design.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Making it Count for a Community College Student

It is winter break after my first semester of college, just after my 19th birthday. Somehow, in spite of narrowly graduating from high school, a series of exasperating meetings with dubious financial aid officers, and the demands of working full-time, I have completed my first semester of community college. Not only did I complete it, but under the Clinton administration's expansion of college opportunity and financial aid, I had done so without going into any debt. Between my full-time job as a coffee barista and a federal Pell Grant, I had covered both fall and upcoming spring tuition payments. And on top of it all, I had finished that first semester with a 4.0 grade point average.

Most days this meant working my coffee shop job between six a.m. and five p.m., then taking night classes from seven p.m. to ten, and long weekends and lunch breaks of studying. It was a full schedule, to say the least. But community college granted me the promise of a clean slate—a fresh start and the opportunity to redefine myself—and it was this promise of beginning anew that gave me a sense of hope and momentum that I had never experienced before, and possibly since. I remember this winter as a time of joy, the beginning of a new life.

At the same time, there was a palpable stigma associated with being a community college student. I recall one weekend morning a regular patron of the coffee shop, a local businessman, came in for his 16-ounce coffee. I steamed milk and ran espresso shots on the other side of the counter while he poured cream into his cup. We engaged in customary small talk, and he asked me how the semester had ended. I told him I had finished with a 4.0, clearly proud of my accomplishment. Even now, fifteen years later, I can remember the smirk on his face when he replied, "Doesn't

really count at a community college, does it?" Just as memorable is the crushing feeling I had in my gut, the sense of shame and anger that came over me, as he turned and walked out the door.

Over the next two years, I would continue as a full-time community college student and coffee barista, working enough to support myself, pay my tuition, and keep out of trouble. At the beginning of my second year, because I had maintained a 4.0, the community college paid for me to take one class a semester from the local private liberal arts university, where I would eventually transfer and earn my bachelors. This dual enrollment program eased me into university culture, and eventually that university offered me a significant scholarship based on my high grade point average at both the community college and the courses I had taken through the dual enrollment program. I graduated summa cum laude at age twenty-two, debt free, and started graduate school a few months later. In more ways than one, I had made my community college experience "count."

A Psychoanalytically Informed Approach to Critical Autoethnography

This is to say, I am not far from this research. When I set out to do this study, I knew I wanted to illuminate the rich and varied literacy practices of my community college students, particularly those especially bright students whose approaches to literacy learning demonstrate the dynamic, expressive, and creative potential of the community college composition classroom. I considered past students, who took to graphic approaches to composing, including film, comics, and 'zines, those students who struggled with formal academic papers but who possessed a keen awareness of rhetorical contexts and elements of style. I was particularly interested in students who didn't "do school" in traditional ways but whose innovative approaches to my assignments threw into relief how those traditional methods needed revision. In

essence, I wanted to present an ideal portrait of what I see every day in my classes: community college students defying expectations, challenging traditional teaching methods, and encouraging me to consider refreshing news ways of thinking about literacy learning.

So it is perhaps unsurprising that my first draft of my research questions was met with apprehension by committee members, one, in particular, who questioned the assumptions behind them. And she was right to do so, as my early drafting of this research did not account for my history as a community college student, one that set up later identifications with participants in the present research. While I will take up and apply the psychoanalytic concept of identification in Chapter Five, a broad definition here of identification in psychoanalysis is "the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (Freud, 1922). Identifications constitute an "internal world and the solutions one needs there" (Britzman, 2002, p. 50). Again and again, in my early drafting of this research, I ran up against myself: "Psychoanalysis insists, those investments, one's family, and the intimate dead, however irrelevant they may seem to one's scholarship, are always pressing close" (Taubman, 2012, p. 3). But it wasn't until I paired autoethnography with a psychoanalytic method that I was able to start accounting for those investments.

So it was from the outset that stories-- particularly students' stories in the early drafting phases, and later stories of my own identity development within the larger backdrop of my own literacy history-- served as the generative grounds of this research. I began this chapter by narrating my own experience as a community college student to foreground my psychic investment and autobiographically determined involvement in the present scholarship. In doing so, I take up the psychoanalytic tradition, which began with Freud and continues through today, including theory building and teaching and learning through the use of anecdotal reporting on individual cases (Midgley as cited in Boldt, 2009). As with my teaching in the community college classroom, this study, too,

is a way of processing my own history, of doing my own internal work around community college literacy education. By pairing autoethnographic methodology with the tools of psychoanalytic mindfulness, I am better able to confront my internalized constructs of learning and schooling and to trace the desires that drive my present teaching.

Research Design

Recursive Organization of Chapters

As discussed in Chapter One, at the heart of this research is the question of identity formation, how it is born out of crisis, and what kinds of demands critical pedagogy makes of student and teacher identities in the critical classroom. It was therefore at the outset that my own identity as a critical pedagogue was implicated in this research, including my early identification with the self-actualized, radicalized educators in discourses of critical pedagogy, and how that identification set up a series of transferences and countertransferences in the classroom. It became necessary then to take a recursive approach to this research, moving back and forth from psychic reality to social reality, by first narrating and then theorizing my early investment in critical pedagogy, particularly its prioritization of and cure-driven emphasis on identity transformation. I needed to go back in time and reconstruct my own early crises of identity, exploring the arc of my own narratives of transformation, before I could come back to my students and theirs.

Deborah Britzman (1998) describes the recursive organization of psychoanalytic method as follows:

> The ego's learning, it turns out, is neither linear nor progressive but entangled in its capacity to touch and to be touched. We are not concerned with positing stages or chronology, for in psychoanalytic method more than one chronology occupies the same space, and because of that ambivalence, we can hold two opposite understandings precisely in the same place. We become torn. (p. 12)

In this research, a recursive organization enabled me to account for identity and desire in the critical classroom, particularly the ambivalent workings of my identification with the three students chronicled in the data chapters of this study. Ultimately, by holding multiple, oftentimes competing, narratives together, I suggest how the "intimate dissonance" of the classroom should be understood as a potentially productive tension in teaching and learning, one that marks the beginning of pedagogy (Sedgwick as cited in Britzman, 1998, p. 91).

This recursive process and product draws on the work of previous curriculum theorists who maintain the importance of foregrounding and theorizing personal stories by means of narrative inquiry, biography, and case study (Grumet, 1988; Lyons & Laboskey, 2002; Miller, 2005; Pinar, 1994; Pitt, 2003; Riessman, 1993; Silin, 1995 as cited in Boldt, 2009). As I discussed in the Introduction, by infusing my academic work with personal narrative, I was better able to acknowledge the situatedness of my classroom observations and present research, including the connections between my story and the topic under study, critical inquiry in the English classes I now teach.

Questions of identity formation and transformation are equally located in both personal and cultural realms, and so critical autoethnography became the appropriate method to approach my own narratives as data sources as well as those of my students, examining their interconnectedness and situatedness in the larger class culture. Using an "intersectional approach" that provides localized and specific knowledge of the many aspects of identity at play in the classroom (Boylorn and Orbe, 2013, p. 31), I trace the psychodynamics of the identity investments in the critical classroom, including how education itself constitutes a relearning of one's history and a working through of new editions of old conflicts (Britzman, 1998). As Moon (2002) argues, culture should be considered a contested space, and an intersectional approach offered up by psychoanalysis "challenges the… emphasis on singularity, by revealing

singularity to be always already a fiction, and a tool designed to uphold power imbalances" (Boylorn and Orbe, 2013, p. 25).

The set-up of the study then created a kind of conversation among the various narratives and emergent identities. I characterize my analytical process as a recursive one that continually led me back to my own early experiences with teaching, learning, and identity development in an attempt to move forward again, to make sense of my students' experiences. The project then became autoethnographic in both process and product, culminating in this collection of literacy memoirs, mine and my students,' interlaced to suggest the tangled, displaced, and personal ways we go about this messy work of the classroom.

In the chapters that follow, I begin in my own narrative vignettes, myself as starting point, to suggest that my expectations of students' literacy practices are deeply and irrevocably intertwined with my own literacy history, including the ways specific texts radicalized my identity (as a feminist, intellectual, and critical educator, for instance). In each case, I narrate the process of my identity "coming to crisis" in this history of teaching and learning to underscore how such crises became the starting point for transformation in my own life, deepening my commitment to specific identity components (feminist, intellectual, radicalized critical educator, etc.). I take this one step further by introducing psychoanalysis as a means of illuminating the way my own identity development is tied up in critical pedagogy's emphasis on identity transformation, which is then transferred onto my students' identities through the demands of critical pedagogy. As an autoethnographer, I have organized each chapter so that the psychoanalytic framework follows each narrative vignette, and in doing so, draws on my personal experience to demonstrate facets of the larger cultural/classroom experience. In this way, as discussed in the Introduction, autoethnography reflects the postmodern challenge to the authority of totalizing theory in its move toward local and

personal considerations of contextuality, contingency, and performativity in identity as it is situated within a larger cultural, historical, and/or social context.

Case Studies

The research design of this critical autoethnography includes detailed case studies of three research participants, framed by introductory vignettes of my own narrative, which are also data sources. These cases provided a "rich, 'thick' description" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) of the how and why of constructing their literacy identities, as well as they reflect the multi-layered meanings of critical literacy.

In *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects*, Deborah Britzman (1998) writes that it is those matters of love and hate in learning that "attach the psychical to the social and the social to the psychical" (p. 5). And in this dissertation, I chose the three cases chronicled in the following data chapters based on how each of them reanimated old conflicts in the history of my own identity development, those moments of resistance, crisis, love, and hate that came to shape my identification with critical pedagogy and its narratives of transformation. In doing so, I approach education from a psychoanalytic standpoint that "asks education to refuse to secure itself through the consolations of certainty, rationality, and progress but, at the same time, to continue to risk itself without the old guarantees" (p. 8). I chose the three cases for the ways they haunted me years after our 2009 spring term and the extent to which they demanded that I turn back toward my own identity development to see how it "plays through, repeats, and becomes elaborated with [my] relations with individual [students,] school knowledge,…and, of course, [myself]" (p. 9).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do participants use critical autoethnography to take up, resist, and embrace the critical lenses of the course?

2. In moments of resistance and cooperation, what are the psychodynamic tensions at play? For example, in what ways does my psychic involvement with students set up standards unrelated to the purportedly objective criteria of the curriculum?

3. In what ways is the 'critical' of critical autoethnography different from the 'critical' of critical pedagogy? Specifically, how is criticality redefined in the shift to a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography?

Research Context

Setting and Participants

Grove City, a college town of 62,000 residents in the Midwest, rests alongside the hilly banks of the State River. I had been living in Grove City and teaching at Kenwood Community College, Grove City campus, for four years before embarking on the present research.

Kenwood Community College includes eleven college "centers" spanning a seven-county service area. Grove City campus, the only campus for which I had taught at the time of this research, is located within a few short miles of a major state university. As such, Grove City campus, unlike its larger commuter campus center, serves a more "traditional" student population, some of whom are cross-enrolled at both Kenwood Community College and the university, and many of whom have plans to transfer from Kenwood to the university. A majority of the student population is white (82%); 8.2% of the student population's race unknown; 4.2% Black/Non-Hispanic; 1.9% Hispanic; Asian/Pacific Islander 1.4%; Nonresident Alien 1.2%; Native American .9%. The average student is twenty-four years of age.

Kenwood Community College offers an English program of study as part of their Liberal Arts program, yet few Liberal Arts degree-seeking students cite English as their major field of study. Core courses of the Liberal Arts program include College

Writing or the combination of Composition I and Composition II; students can also choose to fulfill core requirements by taking Composition I and Technical Writing. While I have taught Elements of Writing (a course primarily for students lacking a qualifying placement score for Composition I) and Composition I, this research is gathered from one section of Composition II that I taught in the spring of 2009.

While I have had Composition II students from Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Korea, and Vietnam--among many other countries far from the United States-- in my experience, Composition II students reflect the larger profile of Kenwood Community College students generally. The vast majority of my students identify themselves as white, and a majority of them have come to Kenwood from other Midwestern towns in hopes of eventually transferring to the university.

This is not to suggest that there is a monolithic culture present in the Composition II section of this study. The strength and challenge in teaching a course like Composition II is the vastly disparate educational histories of the students enrolled in any one section. In the past, I have had Composition II students possessing graduate degrees from institutions in the United States and abroad who were simply looking to improve their writing skills; others come to Kenwood after recently graduating from the local "alternative" high school; some are recently returned veterans after several tours of duty and years of service. This eclectic group presents as many challenges as opportunities in the teaching of writing.

Composition Courses at Kenwood

The college's basic course description of Composition II is as follows: "Teaches precise and responsible use of research tools. Requires critical analysis of reading materials, audience and self when communicating content material. Develops students' ability to use effective and ethical arguments" (Website). Unlike Composition I or Elements of Writing, Composition II includes an emphasis on analysis, argument, and

research. In the past, as well as in this study, theories of critical literacy have informed

my teaching of the course. Freirean critical literacy, based Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of*

the Oppressed (1968), conceives of literacy as a means of empowering disenfranchised

populations through an examination, analysis, and deconstruction of cultural texts. I

regularly incorporate multiple readings of texts in such a way that students' discursive

backgrounds are used to call into question the authority of any given text, and I

encourage resistant readings of texts to work against dominant interpretations (e.g.

interpreting canonized literature through Marxist or feminist lenses of analysis).

The Composition II Course Chronicled in this Study

        The composition section of this study took place in the spring semester of 2009,

over the course of a traditional sixteen-week semester between the months of January

and May. During this semester, students wrote two main papers, a media analysis and a

literary analysis, that led up to and informed the final paper, the critical

autoethnography and its related portfolio project.

        Much of this final paper and project was based on the work of Bonnie Sunstein,

whose course, Approaches to Teaching Writing, I observed (spring, 2007) and later

taught as a teaching assistant (fall of 2007-spring of 2008). Sunstein structured the first

half of the course around two main assignments, a literacy memoir and its

accompanying literacy portfolio, each models for my Composition II course's

autoethnography and accompanying portfolio project. Sunstein and Lovell's (2000)

The Portfolio Standard, in particular, shaped my thinking around how to get students to

set their own standards, to define their own literacy practices, through the collection

and reflection processes of portfolio keeping: "[I]t is a shifting document of the

multiple processes of learning, constantly changing as a student continues to learn" (p.

xx). I also had students take up what Sunstein and Lovell refer to as a "double

strategy": an annotated table of contents in which students demonstrate their idiosyncratic and thematic means of organizing artifacts, and a one-page reflection on the process of putting together the literacy portfolio, including the kinds of themes, if any, that emerged, and the overall portrait of themselves as literacy learners that is reflected by the portfolio product (p. xxi). As a teaching assistant for Sunstein the spring of 2006, I saw how these assignments generated lively, organic conversations among students that de-centered Sunstein's role as the professor by encouraging students to seek out and discover for themselves their own unique literacy practices and values in teaching and learning. By turning to autoethnography as a means of critical inquiry in both the classes I teach and this present research, my aim was similar: to build ground-up, participant- generated definitions of critical literacy and to de-center my role as objective, distant teacher/researcher in search of a still and certain outcome. Sunstein and Lovell (2000) write, "Portfolios help us reclaim our identity in a world that uses standards to keep order and control...portfolios can place value on literate activities that are undervalued in our schools" (p. xiii). In Sunstein's Approaches to Teaching Writing course, she began by having students tell the story of a "text of importance" in their lives, never giving formal instructions beyond that, other than to develop those stories for the following class. I took up this same approach in the Composition II class chronicled in this research, tracing both student-participants' texts of significance and my own, to turn away from formal guidelines and requirements and to move toward those nonrational currents of desire, identification, love, and loss in literacy learning.

More broadly, the course description from my syllabus the spring of 2009 is as follows:

> Composition II is a course in which you will learn to craft your scholarly voice in response to myriad texts, including essays, memoirs, films, and literature. In addition, this course emphasizes each phase in the writing process-- the drafting, researching, and peer reviewing stages, so come prepared to share both your

ideas and your writing with our community. This course is both process-
oriented and discussion-centered, and I value your contributions to our class
conversations throughout the term. You should be both engaged with and
critical of the reading and writing presented. (Syllabus, p. 1, 2009)

Informing the work of the two papers and final paper and portfolio project is a series of

"reading responses" that I have described in the syllabus as follows:

The purpose of these responses is two-fold: 1) I get an impression of your
writing and how you're comprehending and confronting the readings, and 2)
you get a sense of my comments and assessment criteria before going into the
more formal paper assignments. I expect to get a sense of your voice in these
shorter (1-3 pages) responses, and I expect you to cite the texts (film or packet
texts) and to craft responses that are organized, coherent, and correctly
formatted (MLA). (Syllabus, 2009, p. 2)

These reading responses offer up a rich opportunity to engage students in one-on-one

conferences about how they are working with and against ideas presented by the texts

of the course. In addition, I get a sense of what is inviting students into the

"conversation" of the class and what could be alienating them. Students are

encouraged but not required to draw on the work of their reading responses in their

papers. In the organization of the course, it is my intent that students build on their

knowledge as the weeks progress, culminating in the final project in which they

demonstrate the ability to research their own literacy histories and identities as

community college students.

Philosophical and Theoretical Underpinnings of the Course

As noted earlier, the first two papers should inform the kinds of critical inquiry

students ultimately use to craft their final project. The first "unit" of the class is

grounded in critical media literacy. Carmen Luke (1997) defines the aims of media

literacy as follows:

to make students critical and selective viewers who are able to reflect critically
on TV's messages, their own reasons for viewing, and to use those critical skills
in the production of their own print and electronic texts. Core analytic
questions are meant to interrupt students' unreflective acceptance of text and to

develop new strategies for thinking about the meanings TV transmits, and how viewers construct meanings for themselves from those texts. (p. 33)

The first class meeting of the semester, I show *Merchants of Cool*, a Frontline documentary about the Federal Communication Commission's deregulation of media ownership to foreground our later discussion of corporate control over media outlets, including the implications of media saturation. Students respond to essays written by media critics (e.g. Robert McChesney) that represent perspectives both for and against media consolidation. The first paper asks students to "research and trace the organization, production, and reception of corporate-controlled media (or one particular medium, if you prefer) and to discuss the effects on consumer consciousness and agency" (Paper One Assignment Sheet, 2009).

I begin in discussions of media because this topic lends itself to students' own knowledge and interests regarding popular culture and politics while preparing them for the second unit on literary analysis, which for many of them is much less accessible. By the time they read "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (Melville), among other selections from the late 19th century American literary canon, they will have had some experience cultivating their own analytical voice and critical reading strategies. The literary texts chosen lend themselves to the kind of critical inquiry—based in politics of identity—required for their final project.

The work of the final project of the course is informed by the previous two papers/units, but the final project spans across significantly more time than the former two; during this phase, the process-oriented aspect of the course is heightened as well. This phase is thematically concentrated on how the process of schooling and experiences outside educational institutions serve to produce literate students/citizens. The course readings prompt students to ask questions of their own literacy histories, including: How has the reading and writing they do at home informed the way they approach school literacy? What was the role of tracking in their education? What

kinds of reading programs did their school institute? Who sponsored these programs? What was the intent behind them? How do they define literacy? What are the implications present in their definitions of literacy? What constitutes "writing" in school? How does school writing differ from the forms and purposes of writing done at home? What is the relationship between writing in these two realms? Ultimately, they will compose a critical autoethnography while keeping a literacy portfolio each step of the way.

Portfolios by their very nature are dynamic—ever-changing as artifacts are removed and replaced, and the emergent understandings generated from portfolio-keeping and reflecting create, as cited earlier, "a shifting document of the multiple processes of learning, constantly changing as a student continues to learn" (Sunstein and Lovell, 2000, p. xx). Portfolios work well alongside autoethnography in that each project grants students the opportunity and choice to construct their own meanings. Both assignments are carried throughout the final eight weeks of the course, with several opportunities for personal and peer reflection of emerging themes. In addition, students met with me in conference, and at drafting stages papers were reviewed by the full class.

Data Collection

The study is based on four main data sources: 1) My narratives of identity formation and transformation, 2) Participants' critical autoethnographies, 3) My field notes journal that was kept following our weekly class meetings and one-on-one conferences, and 4) Students' informal class reflections (via email or in writing in class). Participants in the study were not be asked to complete any additional writing or time outside of that required for the course.

Method of Analysis

Psychoanalysis gave me the language and theoretical framework to interrogate the kinds of demands my desire for recognition placed upon my students, and how this desire presupposed and oftentimes precluded the aims of [critical] education. Unlike critical pedagogy, psychoanalysis leaves open the question of whether or not participants' investments or identity components are really "their own" or the result of hegemony. In this way, psychoanalysis offered me as a researcher an alternative way to conceptualize conflict, one that does not oversimplify identity in terms of political or social alliance (Bracher, 2002, p. 115).

Eventually several key concepts from psychoanalysis came to act as reference points for framing the analysis process. In each data chapter, I open in a narrative of my own identity development as it is related to the identity of focus in each focal student's narrative. Following my narrative vignette, I introduce key concepts from psychoanalysis that give me a specific language of critique and conceptual framework to analyze how the psychodynamic conflicts of the classroom are rooted in our personal histories of identity development and investment and the unconscious desire to keep our sense of those identities coherent and recognized through the work of the class. Recurring concepts include: displacement, identification, recognition/misrecognition, and transference/countertransference. I define and more deeply explore each concept as it is introduced in the data chapters that follow.

My Own Investment in this Study

As my opening narrative to this chapter suggests, as a community college instructor and former community college student, I am both professionally and personally invested in the rich literacy histories of my community college students and the ways they take up my critical curriculum. This investment was the impetus behind devising a research study that would invite the multiple literacies of my students into

analytical frameworks in ways that demonstrate the idiosyncratic and constructed nature of literacy, as well as how my community college students' literacy practices have prompted me to re-envision a composition curriculum that responds to and validates their multiple and dynamic literacy practices. Operating under the assumption that, prior to my class, community college students' literacies were not validated in traditional school contexts, I chose an autoethnographic method with which students could recognize and revalue their unique literacy practices through critical inquiry and personal narrative. My own history of education and of being a community college student was left out of the original design.

As the drafting progressed, however, psychoanalysis as lens through which to read autoethnography came to enable me to account for how my own history of learning and identity development shaped these unconscious assumptions that premised the early design of this research, particularly the assumptions that 1) community college students come to my class *in need* of validation of their literacy practices and 2) community college students' literacies, more generally, represent unique, nontraditional ways of enacting literacy that have not been recognized and validated in their previous history of schooling.

These assumptions lie in my own history as a community college student who narrowly graduated high school and who needed validation in a school setting. As I will narrate in the data chapters that follow, my own identity development has been predicated on a series of crises in narrative, moments in time in which I was made to lay claim to a particular identity—as feminist and as intellectual, for instance—and emerged a changed, more vigilant or critically conscious person. As discussed in the previous two chapters, it was this identification with similar narratives of transformation that first drew me to discourses of critical pedagogy and its emphasis on providing students with "opportunities to devise different assemblages of self

(McLaren, 1994, p. 214) and "the incipient constitution of a new identity" (JanMohamed, 1994, p. 245).

In *Pedagogical Desire*, Mark Bracher (2002) argues that a close reading of critical pedagogy reveals that "the central desire animating this pedagogy is the teachers' desire for identity itself—more specifically, their desire for a strong *identity for their students*, whose own desire for identity the teachers have identified with" (p. 110). Again, identifications constitute an "internal world and the solutions one needs there" (Britzman, 2002, p. 50). By returning to the community college classroom as teacher and researcher, I engage in the process of working through my unconscious desire for recognition as a *good* teacher, perhaps the recognition, too, that validates my previous identity as a *good* student, whose 4.0 really did mean something, even if earned at a community college.

In the chapters that follow, I will explore how the ego's defenses emerge, from both external realities of the classroom and internal realities of the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, and how pedagogy—in my case, critical pedagogy—sets up unconscious demands of students' identity performances to protect the teacher's ego. I take up Lacan's psychoanalytic concept of the mirror stage to discuss my relationship to critical pedagogy and to argue for the ways that discourses of pedagogy can set up our identities as teachers based on a fictional reality, what Lacan refers to as the Ideal-I. Once we move into the social space of the classroom, that fictional self-image—that *fantasy* image of ourselves as certain kinds of teachers—may or may not be reflected back by our students, and certainly not reflected back in a way that is bounded and whole: We find ourselves at odds with ourselves, as was the case chronicled in the following chapter.

Ultimately, my goal for the present study has been to come to a position of critical and reflexive awareness of my work as a teacher of writing in the community college classroom. It is, in this way, a study born out of my own kind of "coming to

crisis." I have attempted to represent my students, myself, and our critical practices in ways that account for the imbricating discursive and psychoanalytic relations in which we are located: the rhetoric of remediation part and parcel of discourses of functional literacy, the community college's attempt to balance the varying roles of academic rigor and open access, the power dynamics and psychodynamics implicit in any teacher-student transaction, and my own investment in critical pedagogy and its consciousness-raising efforts. I have grappled with ways to let my own and my students' narratives generate a space in which I can begin to account for the nexus of power relations that gives rise to the productive tensions of teaching and learning. And in this examination of the intersections among the political, intellectual, and personal—the psychic and the social-- I have called into question my own grand narrative of teacher as liberator of students' consciousnesses.

In this way, it has been through the work of a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography that I have attempted to illuminate the ideological underpinnings of my own pedagogy, including how the demands of critical inquiry oftentimes speak for rather than with students, how the critical classroom runs the risk of reproducing power/knowledge hierarchies, and how the process of a psychoanalytically informed autoethnography can act as an interruptive practice in which students and teachers alike acknowledge their multiple subject positions and unconscious investments, ultimately challenging the presumed neutrality of any class or writing assignment, including my own.

Overview of Chapter Four

In Chapter Four, the first of three data chapters, I open with a narrative account of my identity development as an academic, which was largely premised on the experience of my religious identity coming to crisis during my late teen years. This period of "emerging adulthood," a time of identity exploration characterized by

instability and transitions (Erikson, 1968; Lesko, 2012; Marcia, 1980) took place in my life during the late 1990s and early 2000s as I transitioned from high school to college. I situate my identity development as an academic within the larger historical and cultural contexts of the late 90s to demonstrate how the battleground issues of gay rights, feminism, and separation of church and state shaped the "culture wars" in which I found myself, ultimately causing within me a series of dichotomies, splitting apart my Christian and academic selves: spiritual/intellectual, religious/academic, and faith/reason. As my identity as a Christian came to crisis, I took up the latter of each dichotomy to strengthen my identity as an academic, preserving myself from the threat of discourses of religious fundamentalism that I came to associate with homophobia, misogyny, and uncritical indoctrination.

I connect my later identification with critical pedagogy and its insistence on reason and rationality as the primary means of coming to critical consciousness to discuss more broadly how discourses of critical pedagogy foreclose religious identity as the grounds for doing critical work. Here, I present Paul, a fundamentalist Christian and student of mine in the spring of 2009, who emphasized a singular Truth realized through the vehicle of faith alone. Using the psychoanalytic concepts of transference and countertransference, I trace the psychodynamic tensions between us as we each unconsciously sought recognition from one another of our particular identities—those of critical pedagogue and conservative Christian—each of which is founded on a kind of fundamentalism, one that insists on self-actualization through a cure, be it reason or faith. Ultimately I draw on Paul's critical autoethnography to offer up the ways that religious identity serves as a means of providing social critique and insight into issues of difference, as well as to show how a psychoanalytically informed critical pedagogy resists outcome-driven, cure-oriented demands for certainty in teaching and learning.

CHAPTER IV

DATA CHAPTER 1

Here in the Midwest...we were not brought up to experience pleasure. It doesn't register on us. It's like trying to write on glass with a pencil. We get into as few clothes as possible and the sight of ourselves depresses us. Sunlight makes us gloomy. We are not Mediterranean people. We're Lutheran people. Even the Catholics up here are Lutheran. And I don't like to generalize about Lutherans, but one thing that's true of every single last one of them without a single exception is that the low point of their year is their summer vacation.

Garrison Keillor, Life Among the Lutherans

Coming to Crisis

Academic Identity Development

In the wake of my grandfather's death in January of 2008, the women of my family sat around my grandmother's dining room table sharing a bottle of red wine and discussing the approaching funeral service. In an air both indifferent and resigned, my grandmother sat back, set down her half-empty glass, and said, "Sure, I believe in God. But we don't need to talk about it all the time."

Far as I could tell, in my 28 years in the family, we had never talked about God or our religious beliefs, let alone talk about them "all the time." Yet we were a church-going family. I was baptized and confirmed in an austere Presbyterian church in rural Iowa, where I spent every Sunday morning at service as an acolyte in a white gown, every Wednesday evening at choir practice learning old hymns, like the beautiful 1912 classic, "In the Garden":

I'd stay in the garden with Him
Though the night around me be falling;
But He bids me go through the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling.

It was a literary experience, a formative one, and I grew to love the solemn tenor of the call-and-response, the whisper of Bible pages turning in unison. I remember as a child coming in late to Sunday service and rounding the corner to the sanctuary, a sea of white-haired stillness, the monotone hum of the scripted liturgy. Not unlike the Lutherans of Lake Woebegon, who felt "that applauding for their children's choirs would make the kids too proud and conceited," my church's Presbyterians were humble, hardworking, unassuming, and "remarkably unremarkable" (Noll). The one reccurring silliness I recall during my years of church membership was when the long-time pastor, Harold Butz, was referred to as Harry Butz in the weekly announcements. It happened every so often, and in each case, like Keillor's Lutherans upon hearing something funny in a sermon, caused our congregation to "smile as loudly as we could" ("Singing with the Lutherans," 2012).

By my senior year of high school I was attending church less, if at all. Even so, my wayward teenage ways were mostly limited to wearing a lot of black, dating a college boy, and reading Emily Dickinson under my desk during chemistry lectures. Yet for one reason or another, my high school French teacher, an Evangelical Christian, set out to "save" me early that senior year. She bought me a beautiful red leather bible with gold edged pages and my name etched onto the cover. Second semester of my senior year I took only two classes, Advanced English and Advanced French. I was the lone student in the latter, and quickly that class became a daily lesson in Biblical teachings and prayer.

I knew Madame Renee's religious curriculum was in direct violation of public school policy, but she was kind and well-meaning. Plus there was very little homework, which significantly reduced my already light load that final semester of high school, enabling me to spend more hours working and saving money to take classes at the local community college upon graduation late spring.

A few weeks into that final semester, I received word that "an anonymous donor" had paid for me to fly to Paris, France, with the French Club over spring break. This was an extraordinary gift, as I had desperately wanted to go but knew the cost was too much of an obstacle. Around the same time, Madame Renee invited me to her church. I went.

That Sunday I was surprised to see Madame Renee playing keyboard in a very loud, very electric church band during the regular 9:00 a.m. service, yet a greater surprise was the very young congregation that stood and sang along with no hymnals, prayed out loud with hands raised and fingers trembling. Some even danced. Thirty minutes into it, I witnessed speaking in tongues and translations. People passed out, a phenomenon I later learned was called being "slain in the spirit." It was considered a gift from God. One particularly memorable service a woman brought in a dog that had bitten her grandchild. It was believed that the dog was inhabited by Satan. It came to church so that members of the congregation could invoke the Holy Spirit by "laying on of hands," a process that invited worshippers to gently rest their hands on the dog while "praying over it" and casting the demon out. I was in disbelief. And fascinated.

I kept going at first because I felt like I owed Madame Renee for what was my actual redemption, a week in France, which would take me away from my small high school in my small town in the midst of dreary March in Iowa. But eventually I started to develop an almost anthropological fascination with the culture of the church, particularly the high school and college-aged members, and over time became a regular at their social functions. I started reading Bertrand Russell's *Why I am Not a Christian* and Edmund D. Cohen's *The Mind of the Bible-Believer*.

One morning, as I was sitting down to Sunday service, a very attractive, shiny-faced college boy with rosy cheeks and blue eyes rushed over to me, asking why I always sat alone and so close to the exit. "Come sit up front with me." He reached out his hand, exposing his thick, muscular wrist, tightly fit with a neon-yellow WWJD

band. I had seen him before at church. He frequently sang solos during the offering and had a gorgeous voice. Sometimes tears would fall from his closed eyes as he sang; his fists at his side would clench and open, clench and open, in rhythmic emotional tides with the music—"But He bids me go through the voice of woe/His voice to me is calling." I took his hand and followed him to the front, feeling gleefully transgressive. Eventually we began dating. He had a motorcycle. It wasn't so bad, not at first.

But the more entrenched I became in the evangelical world of that particular church, the angrier I grew. Once, out in the church parking lot before service, the pastor warned me that smoking was a sin. Christ, didn't he know that I was getting ready *for Europe*? More serious were the lengthy sermons on why women should be submissive to men in marriage. One morning in Advanced French, Madame Renee read a passage to me from 1 Corinthians: "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." At the time, my mother had just started substituting at the high school to help make ends meet after a nasty divorce. Madame Renee explained to me that my parents' marriage fell apart not because my step-father was a philandering cocaine addict but because my mom was not submissive enough to him.

Not to mention that many of the young women I befriended at the church were married and busy with raising children of their own by their twentieth birthdays. The ones who did go to college seemed to attend either Evangel University or Emmaus Bible College, where they majored in Elementary Education while their husbands worked toward Bachelor of Science degrees in Biblical Studies (I would smile as loud as I could hearing about those B.S. degrees). The group was otherwise decidedly anti-academic, and in many cases I found their politics reprehensible. I stopped having anything to do with the church at all after the boy I was dating refused to come see my new apartment that I shared with two roommates, Kelsey and Jeff, because Jeff was

gay. According to him, by extension I was "living in sin." He urged me to move. That was the last time we talked.

By the time I had detangled my life from this church, I was 19 and in college, where I would become more deeply invested in philosophy, atheism, and liberalism through my relationships with peers and books. My trip to France my senior year had inspired me to become a French major, and my experience with Evangelical Christians had inspired me to minor in Psychology. I was reading Freud, Marx, and Sartre, eventually getting heavily into Existentialism. I took up smoking more regularly. Gauloises, if you couldn't already guess.

Religion and Identity in Emerging Adulthood

However cliché, an identity was forming. I was becoming, in my mind, an intellectual. This identity, reflective of the battleground issues that shaped the "culture wars" of the late '90s and early 2000's—gay rights, feminism, separation of church and state-- formed itself in relation to what I saw as the anti-intellectualism of many Christians, particularly Evangelicals, and what seemed to me their very uncritical acceptance of deeply flawed systems of domination, particularly sexism. It would take me years to unravel this relationship, this false dichotomy of intellectuals and Christians, in time made possible through relationships forged with intellectual Christians doing work in philosophy and ethics, political Quakers deeply and actively invested in social justice work, and too many sexist intellectual atheist liberals to name.

But before I got back to my Presbyterian roots where I could believe in God without having to talk about it all the time, I started teaching students at the same age as I was, doing the same kind of identity work that I had, just half a decade before. These students, ages 18, 19, and 20, were entering a phase characterized as an "age of possibilities" (Arnett, 2004, p. 8), a period of "emerging adulthood" extending the identity exploration process instigated in adolescence to a period characterized by

instability and transitions, where individuals are free to consider multiple personal and social roles before embracing the commitments of adulthood. While previous work (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980) tends to relegate the identity development process to adolescence, more recent theories have indicated that the most significant period of identity exploration may actually occur during late adolescence to early adulthood, the time from the late teens through the mid-twenties (Lesko, 2012). Certainly this was the case for me, ages 18, 19, and 20, as I divided my time between the Sermon on the Mount and Sartre, dating a motorcycle-driving conservative Christian while campaigning for Nader.

During this phase of emerging adulthood, spirituality and religion are important sources of influence and identification, particularly so for college students, as they had been for me. In fact, evidence demonstrates that participation in higher education may increase individuals' desire to explore religious identity, particularly for those in the phase of emerging adulthood (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). For many students, the early semesters of college introduce new opportunities for autonomous decision-making that depart from the beliefs and values of their home communities and cultures. This may intensify students' desire to make more intentional, autonomous decisions regarding their own beliefs and values, paving the way for an exploration process that guides later identity commitments (Arnett, 2004).

Reason as Proof of Critical Inquiry

This is perhaps why critical pedagogy stood out to me as a young teacher: I wanted students to use critical lenses to question and complicate their parents' narratives, their churches' narratives, their media's narratives in order to trace the social constructedness of identity, its fragmented and dynamic nature, and ultimately the agency they have to subvert and transform those narratives for themselves and their own lives at this crucial and exciting phase of emerging adulthood. Critical pedagogy

had prompted me as a student of the same age to use reason to question authority—of texts, master narratives, and people in power, and I wanted my students to feel similarly empowered by it.

However, as I discussed earlier, an important critique of critical pedagogy is that the identity of the critical pedagogue is not implicated in the identity work of the larger class, including her own politics of location (Janks, 2002). These critiques illuminate how particular literacy practices and subject positions unconsciously become validated over others in such a way that the critical classroom reproduces power hierarchies in the name of "consciousness-raising." As I discussed in the Literature Review, other critics cite critical pedagogy's rationalistic underpinnings and supposed reliance on "open dialogue" as ways of masking its inherently paternalistic praxis (Bracher, 2002; Gore, 1993; Ellsworth, 1989; Janks, 2002).

Absence of Religious Identity in Critical Pedagogy

Years passed in my own critical classrooms, and over time I recognized that, of the critical lenses we regularly discussed in class, there was a privileging of race, class, and gender identities. Religion and religious identity were markedly left out, both in the anthologies and readers and in discussion more broadly. Unsurprisingly, this absence of discussion regarding religion/religious identity in discourses of critical pedagogy has left critical educators unprepared to address the kind of student resistance that is grounded in religious belief (Goodburn, 1998). This is particularly problematic in that critical educators' foreclosing of students' religious identities as viable identity components runs the risk of reproducing the very power hierarchies critical pedagogy aims to dismantle. Furthermore, as Amy Goodburn (1998) argues, "By ignoring the similar roles of social critique in the discourses of both fundamentalists and critical educators, critical educators often miss opportunities to find areas of common ground

with fundamentalist students and leave their own assumptions about the methods and goals of critical pedagogy uninterrogated—in decidedly uncritical ways" (p. 334).

This absence is particularly striking in light of the ubiquity of religion in the United States, particularly among college students. According to a national study by the Higher Education Research Institute, the majority of first-year college students believe in God (79%), attend religious services occasionally or frequently (81%), discuss religion and spirituality with friends (80%), and pray at least weekly (69%). Prayer, in particular, and its importance in identity development, has been linked to college students' psychosocial lives and self-perceptions (Higher Education Research Institute, 2003). As was the case in my own emerging adulthood, this link between religious identity/practices and students' psychosocial development is particularly evident during the college years, when the search for meaning and purpose in life preoccupies a majority of students' minds (Arnett, 2006, 2007b).

In light of the important role that religion plays in college students' personal and social lives and identity commitments, its omission in critical pedagogy is notable. In spite of an emphasis on student experience as the foundation for teaching and learning, critical pedagogy's privileging of racial, class, and gender identities oftentimes excludes religious identity, a "construct which intersects and envelops these categories in many students' lives" (Goodburn, 1998, p. 333). Furthermore, when the religious identity of students is discussed in the literature of critical pedagogy, it is typically disparagingly characterized, oftentimes as an issue to overcome (Kincheloe, 1993).

In an effort to better understand the histories and identities my students bring to bear in the writing classroom, critical autoethnography as method offered me a unique opportunity to carefully consider students' local acts of self-construction, of narrative, as they worked to connect to the broader cultures that shape their lives, including religion and religious identity. Unlike the early assignments of the course that consisted of a top-down, instructor-mandated set of critical lenses for students to take

up in their writing, critical autoethnography opened up a space where students could draw on the cultural contexts that seemed most important to them.

Yet highlighting students' critical self-reflections of their social and religious identities alone falls short. Earlier in this chapter, I opened by accounting for my own initial identification with critical pedagogy to consider, too, how my identity as a good teacher has been premised on the omission of religion and religious identity in the critical classroom. In my own emerging adulthood, I came to understand religion and religious identity as synonymous with narrow-mindedness, misogyny, anti-intellectualism, and the absence of critical reflection. So to assume the identity of critical pedagogue, grounded in an approach that omits or disparagingly dismisses religious identity, was to reinscribe my earlier sense of religious identity, particularly fundamentalist Christian identity, as antithetical to criticality.

In this chapter, I come to consider how my assumption of the identity of the critical pedagogue has confined me, requiring me to assume certain qualities and stances as my own, while simultaneously demanding that I repress and deny other urges, impulses, and desires in the classroom, including the desire to connect with students who espouse strong, oftentimes conservative, religious beliefs. In "I Love Them to Death," an essay that explores the teacher's fantasies of loss of control in the classroom, Peter Taubman writes, "Unable to face these terrifying and repulsive feelings, desires, and impulses, we split them off and project them onto others, who emerge as, for example, murderous, dirty, wanton, seductive, aggressive, rejecting, and slothful, and who seem to remain an enigma, forever the object of scrutiny" (2006, pp. 28-29). By focusing on how my identification with critical pedagogy foreclosed religion and religious identity as critical standpoints, I trace how my identity as a good teacher was threatened by the ambivalence I felt for a fundamentalist Christian student, Paul, who framed every assignment of the course in terms of his religious identity, and yet who remained highly engaged as a class participant and highly capable as a writer

and critical thinker through the course of our semester together, thus complicating my previously held dichotomies.

In this chapter, I linger in the competing ways love and hate tug at our desires in the classroom--at how ambivalence serves as an engine in education-- and the ways our identities in the classroom are implicated in the desires of others. Drawing on my relationship with Paul, I focus on resistance, both his resistance to my curriculum and my resistance to his insistence on framing every assignment in terms of his identity as a Christian. While oftentimes opposition between instructors' and students' desires poses a significant barrier to realizing the critical aims of education, ultimately I describe how resistance, in fact, marks engagement, and how critical autoethnography as method eventually enabled us both to foreground religious identity as a critical standpoint. Ultimately, I trace how resistance illuminates in each of us a desire to be recognized by the other, and how critical pedagogy runs the risk of becoming authoritarian if the teacher demands that her students identify with some aspect of her own identity, such as her ideals or values, including her dismissal of religious identity as critical standpoint.

I end this chapter with a look at "The Proverbial Silver," Paul's autoethnography for my class. In it, he exemplifies how the self can act as a starting point for cultural acquisition and interpretation, and how we might, as teachers of writing, draw on students' autoethnographies to arrive at a richer, more nuanced understanding of our own classroom communities and their underlying values and psychodynamics.

Nonrational Undercurrents of the Critical Classroom

A Case of Transference and Countertransference

On my grounds, not a church but a classroom, a decade after my own Evangelical phase, I found myself once again being undone by a shiny-faced, blue-eyed

Christian boy. I cannot recall a morning during the spring of 2009 when Paul did not

beat me to our 8:00 a.m. Composition II class. Before me, before his classmates, and

before, I suspect, the sun on those late winter mornings, he would secure his regular

spot in the middle of the back row of the room and review the reading assigned. He

was a good student, and quickly I came to develop a strange dependence on his

presence in our class, his physical presence and its consistency, as well as his

intellectual presence, his regularly insightful contributions to our class discussions. He

sat across the room in direct opposition to me, an apt analogy of our identities in the

classroom, which, while seemingly oppositional, also constituted a closeness and a

likeness in our similar desires for recognition and identity coherence.

In psychoanalysis, this desire for a secure identity is a continuous one,

particularly in the work of teaching and learning, "the only question being what form of

identity support a person will seek and what frequency and intensity of support are

necessary to sustain the individual" (Bracher, 2002, p. 100). In "Identity and Desire in

the Classroom," Mark Bracher writes,

> The more fundamental desire to maintain identity through performing,
> defending, and consolidating its components and structures is also a constant
> force bearing on both teaching and learning...the most effective pedagogical
> practices will be those in which the process of learning and developing brings to
> students the greatest identity benefits, whether in the form of recognition or
> increased agency, or the performance or defense of
> already acquired components (pp. 100-101)

When reading critical pedagogy's emphasis on identity overhaul and transformation

through a psychoanalytic lens, it becomes clear how resistance in the classroom can

emerge, from instructors and students alike. And in light of my own identification with

critical pedagogy, which forecloses religious identity as a critical standpoint, my

opposition to Paul and his insistence on my recognition of his Christian identity brings

the nature of our conflict to the fore.

The first tension to emerge between Paul and me came early on in the course. Two weeks in, in preparation for the critical autoethnography and to prompt students to begin thinking about their literacy histories, I had them write about a "text of significance." It was at this point that Paul first made it clear to me that he was a Christian and that this identity was paramount to his understanding of himself and his work in the class. Paul named the Bible in his response:

> The most influential text in my life has been the Bible. I have been reading scripture for a few years now, and have come to realize that without God, or the absolute truth that He brings, there is no truth. No right, no wrong, just theories that are as empty as those who wrote them…In my papers that I write you will probably notice in one way or another that I incorporate my faith into the words of my papers. If you haven't, you probably will. ☺ (Introductory Prompt Response)

There were a couple of other students who named the Bible as their text of significance, but Paul's response more than named his Christianity. To me, he was making an implicit charge against my curriculum, a course of study that no doubt would appear to him as Godless theories as empty as his instructor. I felt immediately defensive. His claims of "absolute truth" got under my skin, knowing as I did that my critical curriculum and its emphasis on fragmentation, multiple truths, subjectivity, and critical reading would not lend itself to his inflexible faith in one monolithic Truth. Surely this wasn't a threat or personal accusation. But it felt like it. And that smiley face at the end felt passive-aggressive to me.

Transference

In an act of transference, a process characterized by unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another, Paul's response embodied contradictory functions, the first of which was to respectfully articulate his response to my question and to end in a seemingly friendly, warm way. Yet at the same time, the underlying intent seemed to be to unmovingly stake his claim as a Christian in what he perhaps felt was a class

that threatened this identity: "The reason the desire for recognition is so basic is...that it answers an even more fundamental desire, the desire for a secure identity" (Bracher, 2002, p. 98). He had been homeschooled prior to the fall semester when he started at Kenwood, and perhaps he had built up defenses along the way before coming to our composition class and transferring those experiences to me. In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1949), Freud describes the process of transference from patient to analyst:

> On the contrary, the patient sees in him the return, the reincarnation, of some important figure out of his childhood or past, and consequently transfers on to him feelings and reactions which undoubtedly applied to this prototype. This fact of transference soon proves to be a factor of undreamt-of importance, on the one hand an instrument of irreplaceable value and on the other hand a source of serious dangers. This transference is ambivalent: it comprises positive (affectionate) as well as negative (hostile) attitudes towards the analyst, who as a rule is put in the place of one or other of the patient's parents, his father or mother. (p. 52)

Paul's response initiated a complex emotional entanglement between us that would persist through the end of the course, at times acting as an obstacle to teaching and learning, and at other times acting as an engine of education, an ambivalence that marked Paul's engagement in the course material.

However seemingly subtle or insignificant his opposition, this first sign of what I perceived as resistance from Paul manifested itself as a threat to my own identity. Bracher (2002) writes that teachers who experience student opposition as threatening will oftentimes "attempt in various ways to get students to embrace the teachers' ideals and desires, by either submitting to them or identifying with them" (p. 102). In my case, I began to identify with Paul, but that identification was as complex and contradictory as his response to me had been, one that elicited both hostility and affection from me.

Countertransference

Countertransference, first defined by Freud as "a result of the patient's influence on [the physician's] unconscious feelings," (1910, p. 144) instigates a charged relationship in which "the analyst really cannot let go of the patient...both fall into the same dark hole of unconsciousness" (Jung). Lacan, too, acknowledges how countertransference "reanimates" the game, causing it to "proceed without anyone knowing who is leading" (1966, p. 493). This kind of conflicted process is also discussed by Deborah P. Britzman (1998) as follows: "A whole object is not taken in: [Identifications] are contradictory in that two opposing qualities of an object can be incorporated or fused for incorporation and they are ambivalent, bestowed with both love and aggression" (p. 50).

Paul's response dredged up my history with Evangelical Christians and what I perceived as their vehemently anti-academic, uncritical, and even unethical relationship to the world. But he was smart, too. And he was a good student, making him as disarming as he was potentially threatening to me. I depended on him. We depended on one another. So in this way, though he sat opposing me, he reflected back to me a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the course material. I remember during a particularly rich discussion of the role of education in the United States, including specific approaches and styles to teaching course content, Paul, after having been clearly engaged but silent for some time, gracefully commented that "too often educators consider the 'what' and 'how' of material but not the 'why' of it" (Fieldnotes, 2009). It was contributions like this that encouraged other students and me alike to move into more nuanced, philosophical questioning of assigned texts and premises.

While his demeanor was generally contained-- his manner, respectful and polite-- there were times during which Paul's sharp, cobalt eyes would narrow during discussion before he delivered what was consistently thoughtful, adept commentary on

our reading or another student's observation. In discussion, I frequently relied on him to contribute if the focus had waned or participation had dissipated. It was during these times that he would offer up a new analysis or connection, inviting others to elaborate or complicate his ideas. While never hostile, Paul could challenge an interpretation of a reading in such a way that decentered my role in discussion and simultaneously generated increased peer participation.

Just the kind of thing I had hoped for in devising my critical curriculum.

I really liked Paul. I needed him.

But when it came to our first paper, the literary analysis, which encouraged students to take up specific critical lenses, not including religion, Paul balked. As I will discuss in the next section, we each met with a series of almost comical resistances that seem in retrospect to be less about the assignment itself than an underlying subtext: each of our needs for identity continuity, coherence, and recognition from the Other.

Resistance and the Need for Recognition

The early weeks of the semester I had students incorporate critical lenses of analysis, including race, class, and gender standpoints, to "critically confront" popular culture texts. We watched *An Interview with bell hooks: Cultural Criticism and Transformation* in which hooks demonstrates the value of cultural studies in concrete analysis through such subjects as the OJ Simpson case, Madonna, Spike Lee, and rap. The aim of cultural analysis, she argues, should be the production of "enlightened witnesses," audiences who engage with the representations of cultural life knowledgeably and vigilantly. Building on those critical premises of the first paper, the media analysis, the second paper, the literary analysis, required students to similarly take up the critical lenses of race, class, or gender to interpret one of three short stories: "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Gilman), "Story of an Hour" (Chopin), or "Bartleby, The Scrivener" (Melville). While students had their choice of which story to analyze, both

the assignment sheet and class discussions emphasized critical lenses grounded in sociocultural and historical concerns: how the economic class, race, or gender of the protagonist or author shaped how we might interpret the meaning of each story. Written by female authors and focused on the lives of female protagonists, the first two stories lend themselves to a feminist analysis; Melville's story, a story of bachelors, on the other hand, takes place in a dreary office environment where workers toil away doing meaningless work, suffering the consequences of alienation. The story takes place on Wall Street, a place Melville makes clear is both literally and metaphorically a street of walls.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, by and large male students in the class chose to analyze Melville's work, oftentimes citing their lack of interest in "feminist stuff" to rationalize their choice. While Paul was among the many males who chose to work with "Bartleby," he seemed drawn to the piece not for its lack of feminist themes (or female characters) but rather its philosophical richness. In discussion of the piece, we, as a class, talked extensively about Bartleby's apathy, oftentimes highlighting the nature of the scrivener's work, which is tedious and dehumanizing (Fieldnotes, 2009). Inevitably Marx was evoked as a way of thinking about a worker's relationship to his product and how class consciousness shapes relationships in capitalism. Ambitious students traced how alienation was manifested in the text—in character development and setting—and situated their analyses within the larger framework of Melville's own life and time.

Yet Paul chose another route. Early one Wednesday morning as we waited for class to officially begin at 8 o'clock, I casually asked Paul what he was planning to focus on for the literary analysis. He told me he wanted to use a philosophical lens to better understand "Bartleby." He said he had been doing some reading on Existentialism, a philosophy that hit the United States around the time of Melville's work on "Bartleby, The Scrivener," and that perhaps Existentialism might offer a useful lens in interpreting the character of Bartleby and the story's strange ending (Fieldnotes,

2009). While not particularly surprised that Paul had chosen an ambitious route for the paper, I was especially enthusiastic about his unique direction and what his research would bring to bear on his analysis.

Resistance

Until writing this chapter, specifically the vignette at the outset, I had not been conscious of the significance to me, personally, of Paul taking up the lens of Existentialism in particular to analyze one of my personal favorite stories, "Bartleby." As you'll recall, Existentialism had been for me at age 19 a kind of antidote to the Evangelical discourses of Christianity, a first step toward defining myself as an intellectual. I remember the affinity I felt for Paul that day he talked through his thinking. Here, in Paul at age 19, I saw myself at 19: "Identification is a means to maintain a lost emotional tie. And identification is also a residue of an emotional tie, however unlikely" (Britzman, 2006, p. 51).

But this was bound to unravel. Again, the most fundamental component of education is "the desire for a secure identity" (Bracher, 2002, p. 94). For me, as a practitioner of critical pedagogy, it was my own desire for a coherent identity that drove the kinds of pedagogical demands placed on students in my critical classroom. Bracher writes, "A careful reading of critical pedagogical theory reveals that the central desire animating this pedagogy is the teachers' desire for identity itself…[teachers'] desire for a strong *identity for their students*, whose own desire for identity the teachers have identified with" (p. 110). Britzman writes, "[Teachers'] emotional states may also transfer an unresolved conflict of childhood history onto the screen of current pedagogical desires. It will be difficult to see an actual student" (2006, p. 113).

Over the next week I held conferences with students over their first drafts of the paper. Paul's draft was a difficult one for me to discuss. His body paragraphs offered insightful theories regarding how Melville's story is linked to other contemporary

works by Existentialist philosophers, ultimately demonstrating how Melville uses a character like Bartleby as a kind of personification of these philosophies; however, both his introduction and conclusion seemed wholly disconnected from his body's analysis of the story. In these two seemingly disparate, unrelated paragraphs, Paul argued that Existentialism was and continues to be a "futile philosophy," as "empty as those who founded it." An excerpt of his introduction reads as follows:

> Throughout the history of time itself, the concept of "eternity" has been controversial in philosophical writing. There are some who eagerly await it, and others who dread its very thought. Of these two types of thinkers, the artistic writer Herman Melville writes about one of them in his piece, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street." This is a story that is very dark, gloomy, and depressing. Bartleby's story can be better understood if we analyze his character with certain philosophical lenses that illustrate the characters of this story. Through Existentialism, one can see how both the philosophy and the character of Bartleby are both futile and pointless. (Literary Analysis, p. 1, 2009)

Here his thesis, the last line of the introduction, is an uncanny echo of his prompt response from a few weeks prior, in which he wrote: "I have been reading scripture for a few years now, and have come to realize that without God…there is no truth. No right, no wrong, just theories that are as empty as those who wrote them."

In both the introduction and conclusion of his first draft of the literary analysis, Paul makes an argument that Existentialism is pointless and that only a faith-based existence has value; yet his body paragraphs abandon this religious argument to instead very effectively use Existentialism to unearth new meaning from Melville's text. In essence, there were two disparate and contradictory sections in Paul's paper: The first argument—found in the introduction and conclusion—was a philosophical/religious argument that uses Christianity to poke holes in Existentialism. Even Biblical quotes were cited in the conclusion. The second argument, however, found in the body of the paper, was the one that fulfilled the assignment, a literary analysis, which unearthed

new meaning from a literary text by using a specific "lens of analysis," in Paul's paper's case, the lens of Existentialism.

Paul's resistance was born out of his own desire for identity coherence and recognition—perhaps, too, his desire to reconcile newly acquired knowledge with his current ideals and values, as well as sense of agency. Bracher writes,

> Students, too, desire to protect and defend the identity-bearing systems of knowledge/belief that they bring to the classroom. This desire often produces a resistance—sometimes overt and conscious, other times tacit and unconscious—to embracing, understanding, or even entertaining the systems of knowledge that their teachers are trying to impart to them. To give up their knowledge or to see it ignored or criticized involves relinquishing the identity-supporting mastery, agency, and significance provided by the knowledge. (2002, p. 97)

Responding to Paul's paper was tricky for me, perhaps because I did not sympathize with his religious argument and, therefore, was particularly concerned that my criticism of his paper would come off as criticism of his religious beliefs. And this is precisely how Paul later interpreted my response. Ultimately, I found myself writing comments like "too moralistic" and "a little forced" to underscore how the introduction and the conclusion carried a religious theme-- or rather *lesson*--that was not present in the actual analysis and argument of the paper, where he proves quite clearly the opposite of his thesis, that Existentialism *is* indeed a useful philosophy, inasmuch as it eventually enabled him to conduct a clear and cogent analysis of "Bartleby, the Scrivener."

As with all conferences with students over their writing, I had hoped that our verbal exchanges over the piece would clarify my written comments on the draft. However, mere hours after conferencing with Paul over his draft, I received a concerned email from him that questioned the direction he should take in the next draft of his literary analysis:

> I was wondering if we could schedule another meeting with each other for tomorrow…I need extra advice on my paper because I remember you saying that I needed to change my thesis statement. I guess what I am saying is that my

thesis statement that I already have *is* my point of view, and that's what I wrote the whole paper on, because I was trying to get a message across.

I also noticed that you put on my conclusion paragraph "too moralistic" and "a little forced here." I guess what I am saying is that morals was exactly what I was trying to get at, and I don't know how I can end a moralistic paper with an ending that is not exactly that…I read about French existentialism, as well as a biography on Jean-Paul Sartre. I still disagree with the fundamentals of Existentialism. I can see that point of view, but I don't know if I can change my paper into arguing for it. (Email, 2009)

Upon reading Paul's email, I was reminded again of how respectful he is while maintaining—even asserting—his religious stance. At the same time, I felt frustrated that we had spent so much time discussing that the paper's problem was not an issue of point-of-view or philosophical/religious opinion, but that the crafting of the paper needed work: There were two different papers going on here. I responded with the following message:

Your thesis and conclusion should neither agree nor disagree with Existentialism as a philosophy because the body of the paper is analysis of a character, not an argument for a philosophical/religious position...The point is that the conclusion and the thesis argue moralistic points that do not at all line up with the body of the paper. If you want to write a paper about how Existentialism is vapid, go ahead and do that, but make sure there's a literary analysis in there (concerning Bartleby and a close-reading of characters and setting). (Email response, 2009)

The discursive moves in each of these emails reveal not simply two different understandings of what constitutes a literary analysis--although on the surface there is that, too-- but a much deeper difference in ideological perspectives. As a proponent of critical pedagogy, my approach to teaching and reading student writing is grounded in a belief that knowledge is socially constructed, that there is no essential "Truth," but rather our perceptions of truth that are refracted through our experiences. A significant part of the critical work then is unraveling the social institutions that have shaped our realities as we've come to experience them. By requiring students to draw on critical lenses, my class, by extension, requires students to believe in the social and cultural construction of knowledge. For Paul, however, truth is essential, immovable, and

undeniable: "the absolute Truth that He brings." It is a constant, regardless of social, cultural, or experiential contexts.

Reason as the Jesus of Critical Pedagogy

Yet an analysis of the underlying psychodynamics of the exchange, especially when situated within the larger context of the course, reveals a striking similarity between Paul and me, too, one that runs alongside our opposing positions to religious fundamentalism. Within critical pedagogy, there is also a kind of fundamentalism, one that insists on self-actualization and identity transformation through reason, a coming to consciousness that is essentially cure-oriented, perhaps not unlike the colloquial "come to Jesus moment" in Christianity, a kind of epiphany or revelation that sheds light onto the essential truth of something.

As discussed in the Literature Review, cure-driven enactments of critical pedagogy, which promise empowerment and progress through the vehicle of reason, can result in a programmed existence, one that forecloses a more reflexive approach foregrounding uncertainty, subjectivity, desire, and the heat of human relations in teaching and learning.   In both cases, Paul and I prioritized a kind of still center, a purity or certainty of identity, which fended us against understanding one another's identity investments and meeting one another's need for recognition.

Our mutual yet unmet desire for recognition set up a series of instances of resistance, from Paul's resistance to my privileging of the critical lenses of race, class, and gender, to my own resistance to his desire to foreground religious identity as means of working through the literary analysis. In this case, critical pedagogy became repressive, a form of authoritarian pedagogy inasmuch as my unconscious desire was for Paul to identify with a particular value, philosophy, and text that meant something to me and the trajectory of my own identity formation as an intellectual. Bracher (2002) describes this process as follows:

However, although it is impossible to completely avoid the authoritarian dynamic, and although the particular identity components one is coerced to embrace may be quite positive, acceding to the authoritarian teacher's desire and embracing his or her identity-defining master signifiers always comes at a price; in order to embody the authority's identity components, students must perform them—through their reading, their writing, or their thinking, and/or in their political and interpersonal actions. And this means that they must ignore other identity components that oppose those of the authority. The old components, of course, continue to insist that the subject (unconsciously) perform them, thus producing alienation, a split between the rejected (and still insistent) elements of their being and the identity components promoted by the authority. (p. 105)

Additionally, this kind of authoritarian enactment of critical pedagogy discouraged me from questioning my own desire for recognition, ultimately allowing me to lose sight of the aims of critical education: to create opportunities for students to empower their own voices and to enable them to experience a sense of agency in the classroom and in writing.

While the literary analysis did not call for it, Paul's self-narrative, in both his early "text of significance" prompt response and his later email to me, illuminates his later resistance to the curriculum and poses significant questions for critical educators to consider, particularly whether or not it is possible to enact a non-repressive critical pedagogy that does not foreclose certain identities from the class as a means of analysis. Our exchange suggests a crucial problem in critical classrooms in which the identity of the critical educator is not implicated in the identity work of the larger class, including her own politics of location and nonrational identity investments. Such a problem demonstrates how particular literacy practices and subject positions unconsciously become validated over others in such a way that the critical classroom reproduces the very power hierarchies critical educators seek to dismantle. And at last, as a critical educator, I must ask myself: Is it possible to enact a critical pedagogy in a classroom where students do not view knowledge as partial and situated? When students' main sources of authority are fundamentalist in nature, how can I, as a critical

educator, legitimize such beliefs in relation to my pedagogical goals? In what ways does critical pedagogy and its emphasis on outcomes become itself fundamentalist in nature?

In an effort to respond to such difficult questions and ultimately to develop a responsive pedagogy that fully invites students like Paul into class curriculum, I turned toward a critical autoethnography for the final paper of the course. Critical autoethnography, as a particular kind of self-narrative, draws on critical pedagogy's emphasis on exploring identity/identities and the larger social structures at play in the shaping of these identities, but the instructor does not dictate the kinds of identities and social structures students should explore.

Critical Autoethnography as Possibility

> When silver is first mined out of the ground, much of the ore is intermixed with other elements. In order to get the precious silver all by itself, the ore is placed into white, hot flames. It is within these flames that the impurities melt away…and all that is left is the pure liquid silver…We are the proverbial silver.

> Paul, "The Proverbial Silver"

In his critical autoethnography, Paul's metaphor of silver refinement illuminates his process of becoming a Christian, yet it also underscores a pattern in Paul's thinking about the theoretical work of our class and, more generally, his relationship to academia. Silver mining, as metaphor, sets up a series of useful dichotomies in Paul's critical autoethnography, dualities that were present in every text he produced for our class and shaped his relationship to the work of our class: purity/impurity, truth/theory, and wisdom/knowledge. In an excerpt from his critical autoethnography, his valuation of the first of each duality (purity, truth, and wisdom) is clear:

> We are the crude silver, which, when put through trials and hard times, are made clean. When we become pure we can see ourselves for what we were really created to be, and that through God can we be molded into our true, individual selves. (p. 1)

In "The Proverbial Silver," the silversmith, a metaphor for God, removes the refined liquid silver from the fire only when he is "able to see his own reflection in the pool." In this case, metaphor, as a means of representing one element of experience in terms of another, provides a useful way of understanding Paul's ideological attachment to Christianity and discourses of fundamentalism, and how that attachment created a series of resistances to the critical curriculum of our class.

In what would eventually come to be a 17-page exploration of his identity as a Christian and how that identity shaped his literacy history, Paul distinguishes the difference between 'knowledge' and 'wisdom.' He writes,

> Proverbs points out the difference between knowledge and wisdom, and after reading about King Solomon, it was easy for me to see that in life, knowledge alone isn't enough…It wasn't until the end of [King Solomon's] life when he realized that all of the knowledge in the world couldn't prevent him from making the wrong decisions. It would give him the sense of discernment necessary, but ultimately knowledge without the desire to honor God was empty. Although sin had broken him into pieces, it was only the mercy of God that could make him whole again. (p. 2)

Here Paul's parsing of knowledge and wisdom juxtaposes his own position to the content of school curriculum, including my composition course's. While homeschooled, his lessons were grounded in spirituality and religious text, effectively joining the curriculum (knowledge) and faith (desire to honor God). And while the previous critical work of my course forced him to separate himself from this important distinction between knowledge and wisdom, a distinction that underpinned his identity as a Christian and his relationship to our course material, the critical autoethnography opened up a space for him to foreground and explore this distinction, and how it relates to his literacy history. Here Paul is clearly doing critical work that traces his definition of what it means "to be educated" back to this important distinction between knowledge and wisdom. It wasn't that Paul was incapable of doing critical analysis prior to this assignment: It was that my conception of criticality was limited.

It is essential to note here that both discourses of fundamentalism and critical pedagogy intersect in their prioritization of social critique, and religious identity generally offers up an insightful standpoint from which to investigate how difference shapes a person's lived experience. As a teacher who supports the goals of critical pedagogy, I am left unsettled by students who view its tenets as antithetical to or even destructive of their religious identities, and I am equally unsettled by how my critical curriculum in the early portion of the course foreclosed religious identity as a viable means of critique. The absence of discussion of students' religious identities in connection with constructs of gender, class, and race creates a discourse that erases or "others" students in potentially reductive and polarizing ways. To quote Bracher (2002), "acceding to the authoritarian teacher's desire and embracing his or her identity-defining master signifiers always comes at a price... they must ignore other identity components that oppose those of the authority" (p. 105).

Overview of Chapter Five

In Chapter Five, similar to Chapter Four, I open in a narrative in which crisis is the generative grounds of my identity development, this time as a feminist. I open the chapter by theorizing how my own coming to consciousness as a feminist was premised on rupture and transformation, a distinct before-and-after break that politicized my voice and strengthened my feminist standpoint. I connect this narrative of transformation to well-known identity theories, such as Erik Erikson's (1968) identity crisis stage of development, which names crisis as the essential developmental task of adolescence, resulting in a strengthened identity post-crisis. I hinge this discussion on my later identification with critical pedagogy's emphasis on identity overhaul as proof of critical consciousness. Similar to last chapter's analysis of reason and rationality as proof of critical inquiry, this chapter questions critical pedagogy's emphasis on transformation as evidence of critical consciousness.

Taking up Lacan's psychoanalytic concept of the mirror metaphor (1966), which holds that one's self is largely a function of the feedback one receives from others, I turn toward Abigail, a student of mine the spring of 2009, with whom I strongly identified and yet struggled to engage in class. I take up psychoanalytic concepts of identification and misrecognition to analyze the ways I needed Abigail and how, ultimately, her critical autoethnography resists my curriculum's emphasis on transformation or a changed perspective as evidence of critical thinking. Instead, she offers up multiple and oftentimes contradictory standpoints, calling into question my definition of criticality and demonstrating alternative ways of rethinking critical work as embracing contradictory subject positions, refusing to reconcile multiple and competing identities, and reflecting the postmodern challenge to grand narratives of unchanging certainty.

CHAPTER V

DATA CHAPTER 2

I seem to have run in a great circle, and met myself again on the starting line.

Winterson, *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*

Coming to Crisis

Feminist Identity Development

I never quite got over the stupefying effect of the 35-inch naval officer sword that spanned the wall behind his desk. It made it so that we could not look at Mr. Kaufman without also catching the light glinting off the sword's metallic sheen. I was fourteen at the time, and I was terrified of this man, his sword, and his classroom. In retrospect I see now that Mr. Kaufman had what I learned in later years to identify as "Little Big Man Syndrome," a condition characterized by excessive performances of masculinity, oftentimes in an unconscious effort to compensate for height deficiency. He was a former marine, the high school baseball coach, and my freshmen English teacher, in that order.

Kaufman's prominently displayed sword was an excessive symbol of the literal rank and file of our classroom. He had us sit in alphabetical order, so that when we handed in our assignments, they would be in alphabetical order as he graded. I suppose this was and continues to be a common enough practice for an overworked high school English teacher, but there were other, more extreme classroom management techniques.

For instance, if a student's book-cover had been torn, exposing any part of the textbook, Kaufman's eyes would narrow like a sniper's, focusing intently on the tattered paper-bag. A familiar wave of dread would pass through the silent classroom, knowing as we did the command before he barked it: "Drop and give me twenty!" The guilty student would then rise up out of her seat, lower down onto the concrete floor,

and do twenty push-ups beside her desk as the other twenty-two students counted along in unison. It was surreal, sadistic, and sometimes mildly funny.

Other student blunders, like incorrectly answering a grammar question, might also warrant the "Drop and give me twenty" command. We never knew for sure when it would happen or to whom, but like sentence diagramming, we knew it was an inevitable part of our hour with Mr. Kaufman: the wave of dread, the nervous laughter, and finally the public humiliation. His jokes had a similar effect, like on our first day of freshmen English when he approached the board and drew two doors: one with a stick-figure woman; the other, a stick-figure man. He turned away from the board and toward the class, asking us, "What is this?" while pointing to the door with the man stick-figure.

A timid voice from the middle of the room near-whispered, "The men's restroom?"

Correct!" Kaufman scanned the room before asking another student about the other door. His eyes narrowed to some poor freshman in the back, who had to have known he was about to get it.

His voice, cracking in a mixture of hormones and sheer terror, honked: "The women's restroom?"

Kaufman frowned. "No! Drop and give me twenty! This is the *kitchen*!"

Nervous laughter, dread, public humiliation.

It went on like this day after day, each class opening in a "joke." No one put up much protest, aside from the awkward silence with which most of them were met. It was tough being anyone in his classroom--unless you were on the baseball team, of course-- but it was especially tough being a 14-year old girl, as most of his humor targeted the uselessness or ineptitude of women. I vaguely recall talking to my best friend at the time, Angie, about it, as we considered ourselves burgeoning feminists and

would oftentimes exchange looks across the room after one of Kaufman's punchlines. Yet while we both agreed it was wrong and sexist, we did not speak up.

Weeks passed. Midway through that fall semester, on the campus of Drake University, a young woman was raped at a fraternity house. While I cannot recall why or within what kind of context Mr. Kaufman brought it up to the class, he did, and he did so as though he were presenting a case rather than encouraging a discussion. There was the familiar silence, the uncertainty and discomfort. Though this time I felt not dread but a kind of electricity moving, coursing through my own body and perhaps through the room, too. I felt poised, on the brink, as he inevitably argued to no one in particular: "Any woman dressed like a slut deserves to get raped. She had no business there."

The bell had rung.

Class was over; at least it was for me. I stood up and walked out of that stifled room while my peers sat staring silently ahead, probably at the sword.

Writing this out almost two decades later, I wish I could say that at this point in the story I went to the administration. I wrote a petition to get him fired. At the very least, I rallied my friends. Anything. But I can't say these things because nothing of the sort happened. When I left the classroom that day, I did so to cry alone in the restroom, before composing myself and moving on to my next class.

And I returned to his classroom the next day. Nothing had changed, down to the sentence-diagramming worksheet he distributed to us to complete by the end of the hour. I remember looking at the exercises and feeling an even deeper sense of pointlessness to them. I put my name on the top and handed in a completely blank worksheet. In this instance, while Kaufman would not change his ways, I had decided to change mine. From that day on I turned in every single assignment with only my name filled in at the top.

I failed freshmen English.

Not-Learning as Resistance

That semester, crisis became the generative grounds of identity development. By the end of the semester, I had mastered what Herbert Kohl (1994) has referred to as "not-learning," a conscious strategy that is different from failure: "Not-learning produces thoroughly different effects: It tends to strengthen the will, clarify one's definition of self, reinforce self-discipline, and provide inner satisfaction" (p. 6). My refusal to participate in freshmen English was a means of resistance that marks a crucial stage in the development of my identity as a feminist. At the same time, as the daughter of an English teacher who had, without exception, thrived in English classes, my choice to fail Freshmen English created a rupture in my identity: While my identity as a feminist was strengthened through crisis, my academic identity became fragmented. No longer did I see myself as someone who related to the hierarchical structure of school, which was magnified in Kaufman's classroom. On not-learning, Kohl writes, "To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not-learning and reject the stranger's world" (p. 6). By my sophomore year, I was on perpetual academic probation. Though I had the lead role in the school play that spring, ultimately I had to defer to my understudy for the performances because I was failing so many classes, preventing me from participating in extracurricular activities.

But I was reading outside of school, books like Valerie Solanus's *S.C.U.M. Manifesto: Society For Cutting Up Men* (1967), which opens with the following dictum:

> Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex. (p. 1)

As an angry fifteen-year old, reading Solanus was like hearing my native language for the first time. I read, re-read, and annotated passages. While I would go

on to narrowly graduate from high school, my consciousness had shifted. Eventually I would enroll in several Women's Studies courses in feminist theory and ethics throughout my years as an undergraduate English major, where I would cultivate the language of critique and be introduced to critical pedagogy as a young teaching assistant.

In critical pedagogy, the radicalized construction of teacher identity presented the opportunity in my mind to work against the kind of repressive class climate that I had experienced in high school. As a first-year graduate instructor, I discovered bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), in which she discusses education as the "practice of freedom":

> My commitment to engaged pedagogy is an expression of political activism. Given that our educational institutions are so deeply invested in a banking system, teachers are more rewarded when we do not teach against the grain. The choice to work against the grain, to challenge the status quo, often has negative consequences. (p. 203)

My first semester teaching I brought in spoof ads by Adbusters, an organization that defines itself as: "a global network of culture jammers and creatives working to change the way information flows, the way corporations wield power, and the way meaning is produced in our society" (Adbusters). We "unpacked" song lyrics, such as Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." (1984):

> Born down in a dead man's town.
> The first kick I took was when I hit the ground.
> You end up like a dog that's been beat too much,
> Till you spend half your life just covering up.
> Born in the U.S.A.
> I was born in the U.S.A.

Students brought in popular culture artifacts, such as films and advertisements, to "critically confront." They wrote op-eds and 'zines. The work of the class was politicized, and my identity as a teacher was forming. I would become the kind of

radical educator I had needed in my own life a decade prior, someone to act as antidote to the repressive climate of Kaufman' English class.

Tranformation as Proof of Critical Inquiry

I narrate this particular moment of my history to introduce theories that locate crisis as the generative grounds of identity formation. In Erik Erikson's well-known "identity crisis" stage, 'crisis' is used to describe a turning point in adolescent ego development and identity formation, which he names as an essential "development task" of adolescence (1968). During this stage, the adolescent

> must find an answer to the identity questions: "Where did I come from?" Who am I?" "What do I want to become?" Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity, must be searched for...The search for an identity involves the establishment of a meaningful self-concept in which past, present, and future are brought together to form a unified whole. (p. 51)

While Erikson acknowledges that this search is flexible and ongoing, the essential *process* remains the same throughout one's life, and the identity strengthens through each crisis along the way. Similarly, Downing and Roush (1985) propose a model of feminist identity development specifically, one that, like Erikson's, includes various stages, the second of which they characterize as follows: "Revelation: Catalyzed by a series of crises, resulting in open questioning of self and roles and feelings of anger and guilt" (p. 695-709). Just as the loss of my voice in freshmen English moved me to question my identity as a feminist and to radicalize my identity, theories of identity development locate crisis as a means of strengthening an identity.

Emerging from these crises of identity then is a more unified and stable sense of self, as Erikson described, a "unified whole." These crises are, therefore, transformative in nature: There is a kind of pre-existing self before the more unified, coherent, and strengthened self emerges from the crisis. Notably this prioritization of crisis and self-questioning as a means of transformation in theories of identity development underpins discourses of critical pedagogy as well, which is perhaps why

critical pedagogy first resonated with me as a young teacher whose identity as a teacher was largely born out of crisis:

> Identity transformation is important to those committed to radical and critical pedagogy. When teachers attempt to transform students' identity, the students often, understandably, resist; sometimes, in repressive settings, that is a good thing. Teachers have experienced the frustration, disappointment, self-doubt, and anxiety, even anger, at a student's stout refusal to learn what we think is good for them. Megan Boler advocates what she calls a "pedagogy of discomfort" which can shatter worldviews in the pursuit of social justice. (Liston & Garrison, 2004, p. 80)

This perspective envisions the critical classroom as a site of struggle, one that "shatter[s] worldviews" in its ultimate aim of prompting and transforming students' critical consciousness. At the heart of this "shattering" experience is a crisis, and the underlying expectation here is that through the critical work of the classroom, a strengthened, radicalized consciousness will emerge, at least within the students.

While I would eventually come to question and complicate this heroic narrative of the changed self, the expectation of transformation shaped my own narrative arc in how I have come to understand my identity as a feminist and, as discussed in the previous chapter, as an intellectual. There was a moment of crisis, a rupture that politicized the work of the classroom for me and strengthened my identity as a feminist. In this chapter, I connect my own coming to crisis and feminist identity development to my later identification with the mandate of identity transformation found in discourses of critical pedagogy, eventually projecting this expectation of transformation onto my student, Abigail's, critical autoethnography. Her writing for my class challenges the heroic narrative of transformation that has structured so much of my own thinking about what it means to be critical, ultimately causing me to question the desires that drive my teaching, particularly the expectation of transformation as proof of critical inquiry.

In psychoanalysis, the analyst's desire for particular experiences with a patient is inevitable and often leads to narcissistic resistances, for the analyst cannot help but have desires—and to want them recognized by the patient. In this chapter, taking up Lacan's "mirror metaphor," which holds that one's sense of self is largely a function of the feedback one gets about oneself from others, I describe how my expectation of transformation in Abigail's narrative has prompted me to consider what it was that *I* needed from her as I sought emotional mirroring in our relationship, only to be met with apathy. In the final section, I reconsider what it means "to be critical," and how the expectation of a transformed, unified self works against the postmodern project of critical autoethnography and its allowance of multiple, contradictory, and dynamic selves.

Ultimately, what I want to offer up is a way of thinking about critical work that allows for the ambivalence and contradiction present in my own students' critical autoethnographies and to suggest that critical autoethnography is one way to have students do critical work in a way that is ground up rather than top-down and potentially repressive. In Abigail's narrative, in particular, there is not a clear before-and-after break that illuminates any particular standpoint regarding formal education and its aims. While she discusses the role schooling has played in how she defines literacy and her sense of agency, ultimately, at the end, her position regarding school is an ambivalent one. In her writing, there is not a definitive "crisis of identity" that shapes her narrative arc but rather competing narratives that hold conflicting and contradictory selves together. I want to present Abigail's critical autoethnography and its contradictory selves as another version of criticality or critical consciousness, one that is postmodern in its open-endedness, uncertainty, and discontinuity.

Identity, Desire, and Displacement in the Classroom

> Displacement is a defense mechanism employed by many other defenses and has a different role from all the other defenses. Locating conflicts in a new situation, displacement attempts to find new solutions.
>
> Neubauer, The Role of Displacement in Psychoanalysis

Identification

I recognize myself.

I am struck by this student, Abigail, whose life mirrors so much of my own. We are the same age, both pregnant with our second children, and each striving to balance school, work, and mothering our toddler first-borns. We had each endured rocky upbringings in tumultuous homes with disciplinarian stepfathers, absent biological fathers, and emotionally absent mothers. In spite of these histories, we believe in the importance of and commitment to family, perhaps in hopes of creating what we ourselves had lacked. Also, like me, Abigail had struggled with finding meaning in school, particularly high school.

In her, I see myself, a former self.

A horizon line.

Smart, articulate, and hardworking, she had nonetheless dropped out her senior year of high school, before finding her way back to a G.E.D. program and eventually attending Kenwood Community College, where our paths would cross that spring of 2009.

I had wanted to like Abigail. Even now, years later, I think I should have liked her, if only because we had so much in common.

Didn't we?

Méconnaissance

But I am in conflict with her.

I am in conflict with myself.

Displaced.

I don't like Abigail. And she doesn't like me. Her indifference and resistance to the curriculum is palpable and oftentimes feels threatening to class discussion. This, in turn, threatens who I think I am as a teacher.

The thick, black eyeliner tracing her dark eyes and heavy lids punctuates her eye-rolling and expressions of disdain.

I hate her.

She is closed-off at the outset and remains so through the end of the course. She enrolled in my class with her husband, whom she sits next to on days of her infrequent attendance. Notably, in both her presence and her absence, he speaks for her, oftentimes apologetically.

"Morning sickness," he laments after class, asking me for an additional assignment sheet to bring home to her.

In the first trimester of my own second pregnancy and quite nauseated myself, I feel a mixture of empathy and contempt for her as I hesitatingly hand over the assignment sheet for each week that she is gone. My class is more or less an online correspondence course to her, and that becomes clear to me early on in the semester.

And yet I need her to turn around as a student. I need for her, more than any other student in the class, to engage in the course. How can one student, in both her presence and her absence, threaten to hound me, haunt me, undo me? How did she come to mean so much to me?

This chapter lingers in the tension between student and teacher, but it also lingers in the tensions within myself as I work to cultivate an awareness of my own identifications with particular students, those who simultaneously elicit both love and hate in me, and how those identifications constitute an "internal world and the solutions one needs there" (Britzman, 2002, p. 50). This chapter is, therefore, a meditation on an earlier theme, displacement, displacement in the general sense of feeling uprooted from

a proper place or home but also in the more specific psychoanalytic sense, the method by which the repressed returns in hidden ways, those displaced desires or old conflicts that re-emerge as identifications and defenses in the work of the classroom. I turn to psychoanalysis in this chapter in hopes of engaging a way of thinking about pedagogy that implicates my own identity—my most intimate desire to maintain the identity of a radicalized teacher, and to resolve the conflicts of my own educational past--and lingering for a while in the psychodynamic tensions of the classroom.

Years after the resistance with which my critical curriculum was met by Abigail, her case continues to prompt me to ask myself: What is it that drives my teaching? Why is it I need certain students more than others? Moreover, what happens when students resist the expectation of a changed self in the critical classroom? What if rather than narratives of transformation, students espouse narratives of ambivalence, of uncertainty, of contradiction? Is there room for this kind of perspective in the critical classroom?

A Case of Identification and Misrecognition

As a high school drop-out, Abigail seemed to be uniquely positioned to offer up a negative critique of school in her critical autoethnography. To me, her story complicated the "myth of meritocracy" surrounding student achievement. In high school, Abigail had been smart and hardworking, but her experience of being "on the boundary" or border of school reveals that not all students are equally positioned to succeed in spite of work ethic and intelligence. Her story reminded me of my own experience in freshmen English, where in spite of being hard-working and smart--the daughter of an English teacher, in fact-- I failed the course. I, too, had essentially dropped out, refusing to participate in a seemingly broken system.

Perhaps because Abigail's story seemed to resonate aspects of my own, I was particularly invested in how she specifically would take up the critical lenses of the

class to reclaim her experiences in school, not as personal failures but as indicative of larger questions and issues surrounding higher education: What is it about what we teach or how we teach that pushes some students out? With heightened investment in her thinking and writing, I looked for how Abigail would draw on her own literacy history to challenge the institutional conditions of school and the effects of that institution both in her life and more broadly in American culture. This is little surprise considering that the critical component of the course was an extension of my own desire for my students to be empowered by the language of critique, just as I had been.

And here, in this desire, lies my identification with Abigail. A broad definition of identification in psychoanalysis is "the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (Freud, 1922). According to Freud, as children develop, there comes a time in which the child must adopt the characteristics of one of the parents. During this period of identification, the child takes on the characteristics of the same-sex parent and begins to associate herself with-- and copy the behavior of-- significant others, eventually contributing to the child's development of the superego (moral component of our personalities). In *Écrits*, "The Mirror Stage," Lacan uses the metaphor of the mirror to describe the process of identification in the formation of the ego. The metaphor of the mirror proves particularly useful here in understanding how my identification with Abigail and her narrative was a means of defending my (teacher's) ego in my own childhood of teaching.

As the theory goes, children first introduced to mirrors reach out to touch the reflection, anticipating the image to literally *be* the person, flesh and blood; they must then learn that the people who are reflected include themselves and the objects that surround them. In a related way, in Lacan's "mirror stage" (2001)-- through the baby's recognition that it is separate from the (m)other, and that she is beyond its control-- the baby comes to see itself as something whole and bounded, a unified being distinct from the surrounding 'not me.' This, Lacan suggests, is a process and an act of learning that

takes time. Donald Winnicott (1971) extends Lacan's mirror stage to suggest that a child's first mirror lies in his mother's face. The mother, by offering the child her expression back to him, mirrors her interpretation of his internal state through her smiles, frowns, and coos. Mirror transference is the "remobilization of the grandiose self" (Kohut, 1971, p. 133), which expresses itself as follows: "I am perfect and I need you to confirm it." Psychoanalytic theories operate on the premise that a baby can draw no distinction between itself and its mother; it therefore exists in a state of omnipotence, believing that it controls the requirements and satiation of its needs, and that all external objects are a part of it.

What is important in this discussion is that the "mirror stage" suggests a means or mechanism by which *we come to recognize and make sense of ourselves by looking to others and the mirror functions they lend to us.* In the case of my relationship with Abigail, I sought emotional mirroring from her at the outset by seeking out shared attitudes, including a negative critique of school, as prompted by the critical curriculum. Lacan refers to this as "dual relation," which is characterized by "illusions of symmetry, similarity, and reciprocity" (Evans, 2002, p. 49).

Notably, this kind of emotional mirroring can be productive in the classroom when, for instance, "the enthusiastic desire of a teacher or student for a particular educational activity or subject matter elicits a similar desire in others in the class" (Bracher, 2002, p. 95). It becomes problematic, however, when

> the enthusiastic desire of the teacher…deprives some students of the opportunity to voice, or even experience, their own desires. And the desire for emotional mirroring can also be counterproductive for learning and growth when it functions as an obstacle to thinking and reflecting about an issue, as when students resist thinking about the social and political significance of the cultural artifacts they enjoy, asserting that such phenomena are "just entertainment" and that it is illegitimate to seek any other significance in them. (Bracher, 2002, p. 95)

In this case, students may reject new knowledge and values (denial) or embrace them but in a compartmentalized way (disavowal) in order to keep their identity-constituting components in tact (p. 99).

Such was the case for Abigail. Midway through the course, in a reflective response to writing a critical media analysis paper, she wrote, "I can't identify what my strengths and weaknesses are in this paper since we don't really learn anything in this class." She wanted more lectures, later complaining in conference with me that I didn't require enough concrete structures for papers or traditional rubrics, including specific points granted for each component: thesis, topic sentences, and citations. She also resisted the critical lenses of class discussion, once rolling her eyes at another student when he responded to gender and race depictions in Disney films. "It's just fantasy," she scoffed. "I don't think kids notice that kind of stuff. You're reading too much into it."

Abigail's apathy felt threatening to me on multiple levels, the effect of which can be described by what Lacan has termed "méconnaissance," or *false recognition*, of ourselves:

> As the specular mirror stage ends and the 'I' must become social, we find ourselves at odds with ourselves. Instinct and desire become things that could destroy the ideal-I [of the mirror image]. But our very ability to say "it's me" depends on the external effect of some image of ourselves reflected in an exchange with the "other"...Built into the maturation process, then, is "méconnaissance," or misrecognition, of ourselves. It is the "difference" that creates the 'I.' (Anderson, "An Overview of the Mirror Stage," 2000)

In essence, the mirror image creates a self-image that is not actually a self-image, but a wish-projection of what we desire ourselves to be; therefore it serves to set in motion a psychological drive toward self-definition based on a fictional construct imposed by the identification with external forces, one that is subject to the fragmentation of personality. In this way, the Ideal-I of the mirror acts in much the same way as Freud's ego in that it keeps this fragmentation from rising to the surface (Sexton, 2000).

What I want to propose here with Lacan's mirror stage is that discourses of pedagogy—in my case, discourses of critical pedagogy—act as the Ideal-I of our work as teachers, particularly during the "childhood of teaching," those early years of establishing our identities as teachers based on a fictional reality. Once we move into the social space of the classroom, that fictional self-image—that *fantasy* image of ourselves as certain kinds of teachers—may or may not be reflected back by our students, and certainly not reflected back in a way that is bounded and whole: "We find ourselves at odds with ourselves," as was the case with Abigail and me.

From the outset, I identified with Abigail; I felt I *knew* Abigail, and in that way I had predetermined a goal for how the class might serve her, ideally in the way critical inquiry had served me. Robert Gardner (1994) describes this phenomenon as "the furor to teach…goaded and guided by each teacher's theory of what is essential to teach. And each furor is heightened by conditions specific to the teacher's character, persuasion, and current preoccupations" (p. 8). I was preoccupied with Abigail and her apathy. Was I threatened that perhaps she, too, was choosing to not-learn in my class, positioning me then as the oppressive English teacher that I all too vividly recalled in my own history of not-learning? Was this projective identification my attempt to rid myself of this underlying fear? Ironically, by identifying with Abigail-- by envisioning and predetermining how her experiences could lend themselves to the critical component of the class, my critical vision for the class, she was made to communicate *my* desire: I had become that which I had feared.

In *Disavowed Knowledge* (2012), Peter Taubman asks, "can we teach [social justice] or create conditions to study [it] without the desire or drive to cure or control?" (p. 25). In the following section, I turn toward Abigail's final piece of writing for the class, her critical autoethnography, to respond to that question. For this final assignment, unlike the previous critical work of the semester, students became critical narrators by telling stories from *their* vantage points, generating analysis on *their*

grounds. This means that the events students chronicled have been conceptualized by narrators who see, organize, and analyze in terms of critical theory that is guided by their own experiences.

What I want to offer up here in this final section is a way of thinking about critical work that allows for the ambivalence and contradiction present in my own students' critical autoethnographies. In Abigail's, in particular, there is not a clear before-and-after break in the narrative that illuminates any kind of crisis or ensuing transformation of identity. While she discusses the role schooling has played in how she defines literacy and her sense of agency, ultimately, at the end, her position regarding school is ambivalent. In her writing, rather than a kind of "crisis of identity," conflicting and contradictory selves are held together, co-existing. In this final section, I draw on those selves to present another version of criticality or critical consciousness, one that is postmodern in its open-endedness, uncertainty, and discontinuity.

Victim of Circumstance

Central to Abigail's critical autoethnography is her representation of herself as a victim of larger circumstances. Before the opening of her narrative, her title, "The Burden of Enlightenment," foregrounds the weight that others have placed upon her. Even the enlightenment she eventually experiences is not of her own choosing but rather the result of forced circumstances in which she repeatedly finds herself. The narrative begins in a magnified moment of a typical day in which her needs are constantly superseded by the needs of others:

> It is 6 a.m. Today must be Tuesday because it's not 5:30 a.m. when my husband wakes me up; I stumble down the hall…The child starts to stir as she hears our movements through the house. After a quick diaper change we pack the car to take my husband to work, we only have one car. We head home for an immediate feeding and the rest of the morning consists of chasing after the child, laundry, dishes from the night before, a second feeding, and as soon as I get her down for a nap I start the same conversation I have with myself every day. What has to be done? Shower immediately in case it's going to be one of

those days that she naps for only a half hour…Diaper change. What can I make her for lunch?...I don't want to go to work. I already feel like I was working all morning. I fight back the tears as I park in front of the salon. (2009, p. 1)

The burden of other people's needs is a theme that dominates the first four pages of her ten-page autoethnography. Her young daughter's needs are a burden to her, as is her job at the salon in which she spends "the rest of the day pampering [others] and trying to be focused on everyone's needs and the problems they are having" (p. 1). When she finally returns home late in the evening to put her daughter to bed, she laments how tired she is and wonders what she and her husband are going to do with another child on the way. She considers dropping out of school to work more to earn more money but then considers the financial repercussions. She has no agency in her life, as she is forced to carry other people's burdens as her own.

As the narrative progresses, it is clear that Abigail considers herself someone who has never had much say in her own life. She describes her step-father, an authoritarian former Drill Sergeant and Airborne Ranger, who "was a bad ass but had a terrible temper and yelled all the time" (p. 2). She writes, "I spoke very little because I was always scared. Every time I had to suppress my voice, the more I didn't have one." Her mother, she explains, was not any better. A "fantastic salesperson," her mother is "over the top, some[one] that intimidates a small child…manipulative, fake, and horribly judgmental…when the sales pitch is gone" (p. 3). Neither parent pushed her to go to college, as they were more concerned with their own lives and goals. Even her younger brother is characterized as a burden: "Since neither of my parents was home very much it became my responsibility to help my brother with his homework and get him dinner before bed…His favorite book was *All Aboard*…and as he grew his interest turned more to Science Fiction. Not really what I was into, but he was so that's what we read about" (p.3). Never does she acknowledge her preferences for reading and writing in the first half of her autoethnography.

Perhaps the most dramatic description of Abigail's lack of agency in her own life is in a scene in which her mother unexpectedly announces that they are moving from Tennessee to Virginia in two days because she had "met some guy" (p. 6). Unsurprisingly, it didn't work out, and when they leave Virginia following the break-up, rather than returning to Abigail's native Tennessee, she is forced to join her mother in yet another move, this time to North Carolina, where they "did not know a single person" (p. 7). She writes that this is the event that took her "a good ten years to get over" (p. 7).

Later in the narrative she describes her eventual decision to enter cosmetology school rather than university, which was more her grandmother's decision than her own:

> I did get accepted [to the university], but when I talked to my grandmother about this she really pushed for me to at least go to an interview at the cosmetology school…She did not want me to take out financial aid and offered to pay for the cosmetology school if I would go there instead of the university…She was quite persuasive and it was a free education, so I didn't feel like I could turn it down. (p. 8)

It was not until her pregnancy, she writes, that she stopped struggling and working "for long enough to look at [her] life." She sums it up as follows: "I felt like all the things that I wanted to do in my life had always taken a back burner to what I had to do…I was not very happy when I found out I was pregnant. I felt like this too was going to stop me from doing things that I had wanted to do" (p. 8).

Agent of Change

Abigail's narrative of herself as burdened victim is foregrounded and emphasized throughout her critical autoethnography, but there are a couple of key moments in which she narrates herself as someone with an acute sense of her own power to shape her circumstances and be accountable. And in each case, it is within the context of school.

The first instance of agency occurs midway through the memoir, after she describes the burden of family and work. She transitions into her experiences in school, writing:

> Luckily academic wise I turned out to be pretty smart naturally. I never had to really study much or put forth much effort and yet I was still able to make the Dean's list all the way through high school, well all the way until I quit going to school. I went to six different schools before high school. So naturally to mask the weak trait of being shy, I developed an attitude problem and became very intimidating to overcompensate…I honed my skills to the point that people either really liked me or they were scared to death of me and that helped. I was never picked on in school and skated through inconspicuously, just as planned. The one thing that I really appreciate is that academically I learned enough in my three years there to carry me through to this day. (p. 5)

Eventually, however, after moving to North Carolina and transitioning from a small private school with few minorities to a diverse public school with over a thousand people per grade, school became yet another place where Abigail felt helpless. The month of her transition happened to be the month that the O.J. Simpson trial deliberation took place:

> There were gangs in the hallway, people playing gangster rap in the classroom, and it seemed like the teachers didn't have any control. After the first two days I did not want to go back. The O.J. Simpson verdict caused quite a ruckus, and fueled the racial tension…I left in the middle of class. I'm glad I did because there were quite a few fights that day.

Abigail writes that it was at this point that she decided to drop out of school. Regarding this decision, Abigail's narrative moves back and forth between victim of circumstance and agent of her own life and education. She writes,

> I skipped school the next day, and my mom went out of town for the weekend. While she was gone, I called her and told her that I wasn't going back to that school ever. She wasn't happy, but she knew she couldn't force me in the end…I felt like a failure. I didn't really want to quit school; I had just had enough of putting up with shit. I hated my mom, the school was scary, and we weren't learning anything anyway…it was a complete waste of time. So I decided to leave.

The main tension between the represented and enacted selves of Abigail's narrative lies in her characterization of herself as 1) a burdened victim, always at the whim of someone else's needs and desires, almost completely lacking agency in her own life and 2) a nonconforming rebel with the ability to change her circumstance through her intelligence and determination.

Rethinking the "Critical"

> As teachers we love and *hate* our students for precisely what "shows" itself, what "stands out," what "vibrates" in them…Isn't it strange the way our "good" students can become "bad," instantly it seems, and vice versa? Or, the way they can "turn around" as the teaching year progresses?
>
> Jan Jagodzinski, Pedagogical Desire

Where is the 'critical' in Abigail's critical autoethnography? Years later, it is difficult for me to trace a recognizable critical standpoint in her writing, at least in terms of how it has been constructed for me in critical pedagogy. I turn to psychoanalysis to more deeply consider what stands out in this narrative that creates such dissonance within me each time I read it.

Immediately what stands out or vibrates in her narrative are two contradictory selves: the burdened, victimized self that also contains an underlying narrative of entitlement; and the powerful, rebellious self that contains within it the conservative rhetoric of personal responsibility and self-reliance. It is as though she has co-opted the critical component of the assignment to create a conservative message of self-preservation and self-determination. Meconaissance, a misrecognition. While critical autoethnography locates the self as starting point, Abigail's self is both starting and ending point, a self-aggrandizing narrative in which she is consistently outside of/above/smarter and stronger than the relationships and institutions that consistently burden her.

Ultimately, she concludes her essay with a similarly ambivalent position on formal education. She writes,

> Going to college was one of those things. I struggled with the issue of not having a "proper" education more for personal reasons than professional. It was something that always seemed unattainable for me, and I have always wanted to get my degree just to be able to know that I have it. I really have no idea what I want in it, but I do know I felt it had unrightfully been taken away from me...Without an education I have limited options. Even though I am successful in my career...having a family makes [college] education a necessity. I feel like I have to be responsible and have all my bases covered, so that I never feel like a burden to my family...Thus becomes the burden, whether or not to conform to the formal procedure of obtaining that piece of paper to become a "have" or remain a "have not." (pp. 9-10)

So while she, herself, does not suffer professionally from her lack of formal education, she realizes that others must "conform" to the process or "remain a 'have not'." Having a family has burdened her with the responsibility of getting a formal education, just as college education itself is a kind of burden, one that requires her own collusion with conformity. And this knowledge of her contradictory position is, too, referred to by Abigail as a "burden of enlightenment," the title of her essay.

There is no narrative arc here that includes a changed perspective, a transformation. And as a teacher, my impulse is to refer back to those discourses of critical pedagogy as a way of preserving myself, of defending myself, against the fragmented, chaotic, and imperfect "méconnaissance" of the classroom in which Abigail's identity does not reflect my own.   Displacement. Here, in this humming dissonance, these contradictory yet coexisting selves cannot be reconciled, and without reconciling them, I do not know how to make sense of myself as a radicalized teacher. In my own narrative, the contradictory experiences of being a feminist without a voice and a capable student who failed--a contradictory act itself in its simultaneous resistance and acquiescence—was reconciled only by strengthening my feminist standpoint. There is no standpoint in Abigail's narrative, only contradictions co-existing.

In her psychoanalytical reading of the conflicts of the classroom, Deborah Britzman prompts teachers to ask ourselves: "What fragments of this self return when the teacher makes a curriculum? If the transference is there between teachers and their texts, can students animate the teacher's new thinking on this old conflict?" (2006, p. 113) To attempt to answer this question, I turn to a discussion of my own understanding of what it means to be critical and how Abigail's narrative encourages me to address contradictions in my own curriculum.

In "Identity and Desire in the Classroom," Mark Bracher (2002) writes that the most fundamental component of education is "the desire for a secure identity," the most evident indication of which is the desire for recognition:

> The desire for recognition can take multiple forms, depending on the aspect of oneself that one desires to be recognized and the type of recognition one desires, and each form of recognition can, in both teachers and students, either support or interfere with the aims of education. (p. 94)

For practitioners of critical pedagogy, it is the critical pedagogue's desire for an identity herself that drives the kinds of pedagogical demands placed on students of the critical classroom. Bracher writes, "A careful reading of critical pedagogical theory reveals that the central desire animating this pedagogy is the teachers' desire for identity itself…[teachers'] desire for a strong *identity for their students*, whose own desire for identity the teachers have identified with" (p. 110).

As I discussed in the Introduction, at the time of this study, my pedagogy was deeply shaped by Henry A. Giroux, particularly his writing on "border pedagogy":

> …students must be offered opportunities to read texts that both affirm and interrogate the complexity of their own histories. They must also be given the opportunity to engage and develop a counter discourse to the established boundaries of knowledge…master narratives based on white, patriarchal, and class-specific versions of the world can be challenged critically and effectively deterritorialized. (1993, pp. 31-32)

At the very heart of these practices and performances is the formation of students' subjectivities, a process in which critical pedagogues aim to intervene (Giroux and

Simon, 1992). Abdul JanMohamed cites "the incipient constitution of a new identity" as an essential aim of the critical classroom (1994, p. 245); McLaren urges critical pedagogues to provide students with "opportunities to devise different assemblages of self" (1994, p. 214).

And, as cited earlier, this expectation of transformation shaped the kinds of unconscious demands I placed on the narrative arcs of students' autoethnographies. From the basis of exposition and rising action, eventually a climactic turning point or revelation should emerge, what is referred to as "critical consciousness," the English translation of Paulo Freire's *conscientização,* which refers to a deeper understanding of the world that allows one to perceive and expose social and political contradiction, injustice, and oppression.

But my central interpretation of what it means "to be critical" has shifted over time as I have refracted my own narrative through the lens of psychoanalysis. While my research has consistently been situated in a critique of positivism in research method, including the monologic of large-scale research studies and their grand, totalizing "master narratives," I see now how my own conception of critical work has become its own kind of master narrative.

My early assumptions regarding what it means "to be critical" were couched in modernist views of truth and a universal theorizing of criticality based on a linear understanding of progress or emancipation: the pre-existing self, the crisis of identity, and the transformation. Therefore, in light of students' narratives of ambivalence, such as Abigail's, I have had to reconceptualize critical work to unpack my unconscious identity demands and to turn back toward the postmodern challenge to grand narratives and the unified subject of modernism that I took to task early in the Introduction of this study.

Abigail's critical autoethnography suggests a capacity for agency in the decentered, postmodern subject that is cultivated through her conscious and reflective

relationship with multiple and contradictory subject positions. Her autoethnography reflects the patchwork of "little narratives" that I discussed earlier in the study in that it interrupts the grand narrative of my class, my expectation of crisis and transformation in students' narrative arcs. She demonstrates the fragmented and contingent quality of the self, and the ways in which literacy learning is both individual and social in nature.

In "Pedagogies of the Self: Conscientising the Personal to the Social," Andrew Hickey (2007) argues that "[a]utoethnography opens the possibilities for the development of a critical reflexivity wherein senses of Self and agency might come to be understood in terms of the social processes that mediate lived experience and the material realities of individuals" (p. 21). It is the politics of location—the power grounded in one's subject position within a given culture or social process-- that increasingly inform writing pedagogies and the agency associated with any particular literacy practice. Critical autoethnography, as a particular kind of self-narrative, draws on critical pedagogy's emphasis on exploring identity/identities and the larger social structures at play in the shaping of these identities. But unlike the kind of enactments of critical pedagogy that contain within them specific identity demands, critical autoethnography prompts students to write from their standpoints using critical lenses.

Overview of Chapter VI

In the following and final data chapter, I focus on Hamid, a student who, unlike the previous two participants, Paul and Abigail, readily engaged critical inquiry in his writing, carefully connecting his own literacy history to the larger historical, familial, and cultural contexts that shaped his identity as a reader. I draw on Hamid's autoethography to demonstrate how critical autoethnography can become the means by which students might anchor personal narrative in the historical, familial, and spiritual stories of their lives, offering up "an alternative to a life haunted by an unnamable past" (O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 16). Through a psychoanalytic reading of Hamid's

autoethnography, I suggest how critical autoethnography can help make speakable those previous experiences through the epistemological and identificatory potential of narrative, encouraging students to identify with the origins of their own unconscious coming into being (p. 14).

Ultimately, I close this chapter by introducing how my identification with students can be a joyful process, one in which I find aspects of myself, horizon lines, bringing me home in moments of teaching and learning.

CHAPTER VI

DATA CHAPTER 3

A man can know his father, or his son, and there might still be nothing between
them but loyalty and love and mutual incomprehension.

Marilynne Robinson, Gilead

Coming to Crisis

Spectral Stories

I remember my mother's books. From her years as a theater major, she had

accumulated shelves of hardbound Shakespeare anthologies, British literature, and

well-worn paper play scripts. More so than the stories within their covers, I remember

my mother's annotations, maps of a life before mine that hinted at her impassioned

relationship with language and literature, traces of a former, romantic young woman

who had not yet endured the kind of financial hardships, failed marriages, and long,

burdened days of raising four young children alone that would come to mark most of

her next few decades. Then, as now, my mother was an enigma, a woman who kept her

personal life private and her past life guarded. Yet preserved in her inscriptions was a

spectral connection to another narrative, one unnamed yet known to me. Somewhere,

there was another story.

I was in search of these spectral stories, first my mother's, then those of

strangers, and, much later, those of lovers and friends. As a child, I collected old

postcards and letters from flea markets, books from my grandparents' basement, and

notes discarded in school hallways. I would keep them and organize them, take them

out and reread them, create narratives in my head of the lives of the people who wrote

them. In spite of growing up in a small house with five other people, my most

formative childhood memories are of private interactions with other people's correspondences.

Perhaps like many children, particularly those of large families, I felt alone most of the time. Whether this was the cause or the result of being a young reader, a bookworm, I'm not sure. But I remember very little outside of being alone, reading, during my elementary years.

When I was nine, I went into our basement and found myself digging through old boxes, one of which contained dozens of love letters written to my mother a decade earlier. I recall the beautiful cursive penmanship that inscribed them, calligraphy of delicate, swooping curls across the yellowing pages. While I did not recognize the last name of the return address, Maybaum, I was drawn to the postage written in German. I tucked one of the envelopes into my pocket, and by the end of the night I had written a letter addressed to the return address listed on it.

Weeks passed and I had more or less forgotten about the letter I had sent, until one night, after my younger siblings had gone to bed, I was called in for a "family meeting." My parents' expressions were grave as they sat me down to the dining room table. "We received a letter," my mother began, "from Germany." I could tell it was serious, yet inside my heart leapt. My letter had been not only received but responded to. I could hardly contain my excitement as my mother proceeded.

Over the next half-hour, it was explained to me that the address belonged to my biological paternal grandmother, and that the man who I knew as my father—the man sitting across the table from me and whose last name I shared—was actually my step-father. My mother warned that I was never, ever, under any circumstance, to write to that address again, not even to speak my biological father's name. For sending the letter, I was grounded for the following two weeks.

Over the next decade of my life, random fragments of information came to me about my biological father-- that my mom met him when she was a foreign exchange

student in Germany when she was only 17, that he was finishing his Ph.D. in Chinese philosophy and poetry when they met, and that he and my mom had eloped, eventually moving together to the U.S. where they lived with my maternal grandparents for two years. The stories of how it had ended vary. According to my mother, my biological paternal grandfather had a heart attack, and when my father flew to Germany to be with him, she promptly filed for divorce. There was little emotion in this narrative of hers. My grandmother's story is the same until the part when my father flies back to Germany. "Your mother tried and tried to reach him, but he never responded. Eventually they divorced."

These pieces of his life, my mother's former life, came to me sporadically and inadvertently over the years and clearly weren't expressed as inducements to a longer conversation. I was thankful for them but careful not to pursue additional information, as the topic of my mom's elopement and eventual divorce—to a *foreigner*, no less--was taboo in my waspy, conservative extended family.

Several years later, one late afternoon in high school French class, our teacher played an audio recording of the children's book, *Le Petit Prince*. While the students around me continued to work through their French grammar exercises as the narrator read, I was immediately captivated by this story, drawn to tears in parts, and couldn't wait to get home from school to tell my mother about it. When I did, her jaw dropped. "Your biological father was obsessed with that story. He sent me pages from it while we were separated, and he quoted lines from the story when he proposed to me."

When I was 19, after I had moved out of her house, my mother gave me the letter written to me by my biological father a decade earlier. She also told me she had destroyed all of the letters from the box in the basement. "Too incriminating," she said. Around the same time I found a funeral announcement for my paternal grandfather, Wilhelm, in my grandparents' basement. On the back of the announcement, in the

same beautiful cursive I recognized from years earlier, was written, "Any sign of life will be kindly and quietly appreciated."

Reading and its Relationship to Loss

In this final chapter, I return to the beginnings of my own story and the story of this dissertation by reintroducing the theme of displacement, the sense of feeling uprooted from a proper place or home. Weaving my history of homelessness alongside the narrative of my student, Hamid, who experienced his own sense of love and loss of a home he never knew, I situate reading as an act of recuperation, "a place in which to find satisfying substitutions for the inevitable losses endured as a part of growing" (Silin, 2003, p. 262). In this chapter, I draw on Hamid's autoethography to demonstrate how critical autoethnography can become the means by which students might anchor personal narrative in the historical, familial, and spiritual stories of their lives, offering up "an alternative to a life haunted by an unnamable past" (O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 16). Through a psychoanalytic reading of Hamid's autoethnography, I want to suggest how critical autoethnography can help make speakable those previous experiences through the epistemological and identificatory potential of narrative, encouraging students to identify with the origins of their own unconscious coming into being (p. 14).

This chapter is, too, then the story of how learning involves loss, those ways that reading, in particular, takes us to places we didn't know we desired, creating within us an aching for home, the experience of homelessness and displacement (p. 263). This is to say, reading produces the ambivalent effects of reconnecting readers to something lost-- and yet creating the very knowledge and experience of loss, the desire for wholeness and connection, the feeling of belonging and yet not belonging. Here again I posit ambivalence as a theme of this dissertation, one that, like displacement, has coursed through preceding chapters and suggests how "acts of identity and the

ambivalent working of identification are neither simple nor conscious, and it is not until conflict occurs and is felt that a thought can exceed its own awareness" (Britzman, 1998, p. 109).

My mother's handling of her history, of my history, was problematic on many levels, though the news at age nine that I had a different father felt immediately validating. At once I had a narrative to frame what had, up until that moment, been an unnamed longing. It confirmed what I had intuitively felt for as long as I can remember: I was not at home in my home. The news I had another father, perhaps another family in Germany, rationalized my strained relationship with my stepfather and half-siblings, with whom I seemed to share very little in terms of interests, appearances, and personalities. This new knowledge also strengthened my identity as a collector of correspondences, a scholar of stories. Suddenly my own inner aching to connect the lines and histories of others took the form of a more embodied search for meaning in my own life, for a direct line to the place I am from, a place to which I feel intimately connected without ever having physically experienced even two decades after mailing that letter to Germany.

And so it began, at age nine, the acknowledgment of a sense of loss in my own life, and the drive to reconnect to something I had always known and never known: "We are driven to seek equilibrium, or wholeness, when our theories of how the world works are no longer consistent with our observations" (Silin, 2003, p. 263). I sought out reading on German literature, language, and culture as a way of strengthening this burgeoning sense of myself as different, even *European*, and quite possibly intellectual. Through reading, I could recuperate a relationship to a father, and in some ways, to a mother I never knew, all the while encompassed by the family silence that obscured so much of my sense of myself and my history.

But it also taught me an important lesson, which was that reading, unlike writing, could be a safe way to do identity work. Through reading, I could escape the

chaos and turmoil of my parents' marriage, the crying babies, the palpable sadness and regret that characterized my mother's interactions with me when I was a young child. Reading was a way of escaping that public reality and connecting to another, more private, reality, which included my fantasies of myself as a European and the daughter of a German intellectual, and the fantasies of another version of my mother, unfettered, happy. But writing included risk. It had for my mother, and it had for me. It left a trace of our inner desires and those shadowed identities—as wayward, naïve, romantic teenage mother and her bastard child--that were clearly not welcomed into the family's public space. "Too incriminating," one might say.

In "A Literacy of Silence," an essay in Linda Brodkey's classic work on autoethnography, *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*, Russ Cunningham explores the "rigid demarcation between public and private space" as a fundamental aspect of his cultural literacy (1996, p. 264). In it, he discusses how the news of his parents' divorce was cloaked in the larger "literacy of silence," the unspoken rules of propriety and cultural code of conduct "designed to keep community members from living out their private lives in the public domain" (p. 267). He explains,

> As a nine-year old, I came to recognize this danger not only through my personal interactions with family members, neighbors, friends, and teachers, but also through the most always solitary practice of reading…Around the time of my parents' divorce, I learned that reading could also give me space…could isolate me…escape interaction with other people. (pp. 267-277)

Later Cunningham discovers reading James Bond how well secrecy and deception pay off, reinforcing his belief that it was best to keep quiet about such things as his parents' divorce: "Weaving between their lines of written text a literacy of silence, these stories warned against the indiscreet use of language" (p. 272). Reading was mostly safe, whereas writing was dangerous and potentially exposing.

In my own literacy history, since I had already been punished once for writing, I never wrote to my father again until I was in my twenties, and by that time the return

address to my biological grandmother was defunct. It was a lesson I'd have to learn again and again my childhood years, the ways that reading alone could serve as entry into those past lives and spectral stories of my family's history and of mine in such a way that speaking or writing could not, should not.

In this chapter, I focus on Hamid, a reserved but highly engaged composition student of mine in the spring of 2009. Similar to the role reading played in my own literacy history, for Hamid, too, reading became the primary means of exploring identity in a family whose history was cloaked in silence and secrecy. He lived his childhood among ghosts, phantoms that resided within him from the suffering of his ancestors, "narratives from the larger sweep of history that…serve to help explain [the] passions, disquietudes, and inhibitions" within him (O'Loughlin, 2009, p. 120). In his autoethnography, Hamid chronicles the literacy of silence that pervaded his own family growing up, particularly with regard to its Islamic roots. They had fled Algeria during the civil war when Hamid was a young boy, and in the years that followed, his parents hid their reasons for leaving from Hamid and his brothers.

It wasn't until 9/11 that his identity as a Muslim became politicized and he began seeking out texts that would help him to understand his own history, religion, and culture in relation to fundamentalist Islamists. He writes, "At this point in my life, I didn't know who to side with, the country I was living in pretty much my whole life or the people that looked just like me, spoke my language, shared my culture, and followed my religion" (Autoethnography, 2009, p. 11). It was in these first days, then weeks, then years following 9/11 that he began to seek out texts that could help him frame his Muslim identity in terms of radical Islam, to, in his words, look for an explanation of "[his] roots, the roots of [his] country's civil war, and why people like [his parents] would want to leave and find a better place for themselves and their children" (Autoethnography, p. 7).

Hamid and I share a literacy history in which reading played the role of connecting us to ourselves, a version of our histories. And yet that very curiosity—"the wish that things were otherwise" (Silin, 2003, p. 263)—meant to acknowledge a loss of connection to ourselves and to the histories that shaped us, consciously or subconsciously. In both histories, text became a "mediating space" (Grumet, 1988), where we attempted to reconnect to the people from whom we had been separated, the things that we had lost, and later, the people we once were (Silin, 2003, p. 262).

Unlike the previous two participants, Paul and Abigail, who did not take up the critical lenses of the course out of resistance, ambivalence, or apathy, Hamid readily engaged critical inquiry in his writing, carefully connecting his own literacy history to the larger historical, familial, and cultural contexts that shaped his identity as a reader. In his autoethnography, there is a distinct narrative arc, including moments of rupture and transformation, that I have identified in previous opening anecdotes as crucial to my own coming to consciousness as a feminist, intellectual, and critical educator, and which would later come to unconsciously shape the pedagogical demands I placed on students' narratives for my class. Ultimately, I close this chapter by introducing how my identification with students can be a joyful process, one in which I find aspects of myself, horizon lines, bringing me home in moments of teaching and learning.

Replacing People with Ghosts

Reserved but fastidious, Hamid always sat in the center of the front row taking continuous notes. He was a stereotypically good student who never missed class, respectfully and warmly engaged both peers and me, and earned high grades on all of his assignments. While he was quiet in many class discussions, it was not unusual for him to refer back to previous discussions in his writing, oftentimes quoting what other students had said. This demonstrated to me that he carefully considered others' ideas, weighing them with his own, and entering into dialogue with them on paper, if not

always in class discussion. He, too, was a collector of stories, while careful about making too much of himself known to other members of the class.

Early in the semester, to prompt students to begin thinking about their identities as literacy learners, the first stage of drafting what would later become their critical autoethnographies, I had students write about a "text of significance." Hamid chose a short novel, *The Last Summer of Reason*, by Tahar Djaout, an Algerian author who would ultimately lose his life for his writing. In a review of this novel, Crispin (2002) writes,

> [Djaout's] words are disconcerting, discomforting, and it's not only the fundamentalist Islamic groups (who have been attributed the responsibility for his death) who should be uneasy, it should be all of us. This book is an elegant argument against the complacency of political correctness that excuses brutal repression in the name of cultural differences. As recent events have all too clearly illustrated, hate allowed to fester anywhere will eventually spill out of those boundaries we thought had contained it.

After Dajaout was murdered by extremist Islamists, the target of many of his novel's criticisms, the draft of *Last Summer of Reason* was discovered in his home and posthumously published. About this novel, Hamid writes, "Not known to me at the time was that this little book would end up explaining my roots, the roots of my country's civil war, and why people like my mom and dad would want to leave to find a better place, like America, for themselves and their children" (Autoethnography, 2009, p. 9).

It is no wonder Hamid would identify with Djouat's autobiographically inspired protagonist, Boualem Yekker. He is a seller of books but also a reader, a *believer* in books. For Yekker, "[b]eing separated from his books is the greatest upheaval he has faced in his life--even the departure of his family does not represent as profound a break with his past and as obvious a confiscation of his future" (n.p.). Eventually, under The Vigilant Brothers, an extremist group meant to symbolize radical Islamists, life in Boualem Yekker's city becomes completely controlled, to the extent that his

family abandons it: "And so, for lack of having a life, Boualem Yekker dreams. He replaces people with ghosts" (n.p.).

Much like Yekker's story, Hamid's literacy history includes within it a recognition of the danger and yet necessity of engaging the testimonies of others. Hamid, too, is left in his life to replace people with ghosts, with stories, in his piecing together of his family's history. His autoethnography begins in a magnified narrative moment detailing the events of September 11th, 2001. He characterizes himself at the time as a well-adjusted sixth grader for whom, in "all [his] years in America, race and religion had never been an issue" (Autoethnography, 2009, p. 3). But things would change after that historic day, beginning when Hamid walks into his sixth grade classroom the morning of the 11th. He notices the television is on and his homeroom teacher is standing in front of it, seemingly "lost":

> I said good morning but no response. At this point I started to pay attention, too…Next thing I heard from the reporter was that a plane had just hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center. I, of course, at that age, was clueless to what those towers stood for, except for the fact that they were really tall and that my uncle worked in one of them. I asked what happened, and he turned around, seemingly startled, like I just snapped him out of a trance. (p. 2)

Hamid starts putting it together, the significance of the event and that it seemed like it could not have been an accident: "Even as a sixth grader, it started to click for me that this was done on purpose, with a cause, but who and why? I would shortly figure out that during my first class after homeroom, where I would get my first glimpse of who was behind the attacks" (pp. 2-3).

Hamid goes on to describe the chaos of his second period classroom, where some students cry, others appear unaffected, but most remain confused. While Hamid and his peers are wading through the fragments of information, an image on the television seizes his attention:

> A picture of a bearded man with light skin and a turban popped up. Now, I didn't know so much about my culture and religion at the time, but I knew that

this guy was one of us. From that moment on, I knew things were going to be different. (p. 3)

For Hamid, this moment of recognition marks a crucial rupture in his identity as a "typical" American student for whom religious and cultural identities aren't significant issues in how his peers perceive him.   He continues, "I remember seeing that face pop up and immediately looking around. Little did I know that it was going to be Arabs who got blamed for everything now. I would get my opportunity to start my hunt for the meaning of all of this about two years later" (p. 3).

In this moment—and several years following it-- Hamid is faced with confronting these representations, symbols of unexamined otherness put out by American media in the chaotic aftermath of national violence. But he is also caught up in the dislocating and displacing experience of hybridity, as a, in his own words, "country-music loving, red-white-and-blue, stars-and-stripes waving, girl chasing" American (2009, p. 12), who experiences a distinct recognition of himself in the face of representations of otherness. Hamid's politics of location is therefore a complex one, one of displacement, ambivalence, hybridity, and loss. From this moment on, Hamid strengthens this hybrid identity, drawing on the spectral stories of his own family's fragmented narrative, and crossing ethnic, religious, cultural, and generational boundaries in his ongoing search for home.

That afternoon on the 11th, as his father pulls up to take him home from school, Hamid approaches the car, yelling, "Did you see what happened?" The expression on his father's face becomes tense and worried: "First thing he told me was to be quiet; next he asked if they let us watch it in school…He sighed and said, 'Wow, oh, geez.' I would only see these concerns grow substantially in the two years to come" (pp. 3-4).

But in spite of Hamid's parents' palpable emotional realities, his parents never speak to him about his family's roots in Algeria or why they fled to the United States when Hamid was four. He writes, "See, my parents are those really sensitive and well-

meaning types that don't want their little boy seeing or hearing about things that they don't deem age appropriate. I have always noticed how they hate it when I bring up Algeria and why we left, especially my dad" (p. 4). Eventually, Hamid concludes, "This didn't make things any better. It just heightened my curiosity. From that moment on, I felt a drive to discover who these people were, where and why they did what they did, and how it related to me" (p. 5).

In *The Telescoping of Generations*, Haydee Faimburg (2005) discusses Freud's concept of "nachtraglichkeit," the "coming to awareness and hence to significance of something that was experienced or absorbed at an earlier time without its full emotional significance having been registered at that time" (O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 12). Faimburg relates this concept to "telescoping generations," the process by which an individual becomes "the unconscious recipient of traumatic knowledge from a parent" (p. 12):

> The identification with this unspoken knowledge telescopes generational time and traps the person in an unconscious identification with the suffering of that parent or even with an earlier ancestor whose trauma the parent had inherited…the person's desire [then] becomes organized around the blank space where the trauma or gap is located. (p. 12)

For Hamid, the emotionally-laden silence of his family, including his father's tight-lipped response, all but screams his family's historical connection to and witness of horrific scenes of violence at the hands of fundamentalist Islamists in Algeria. Thus his curiosity is fueled, and curiosity, as Silin (2003) suggests, "is itself a form of appetite that children continuously seek to satisfy through fantasy, story, and the creation of coherent fictions" (p. 263).

Much like my own early rifling through my mother's old love letters, Hamid's curiosity takes him on several clandestine trips through his parents' illicit archives. At thirteen, he "finds" a videotape with "Algeria vs. Brazil" scrawled on its side. Since he is home alone and "no one would ever find out, it wouldn't hurt," he puts it on:

> After about ten minutes of the game, I decided to fast forward, and what I was about to come across when I hit 'play' would be deeply disturbing and left a deep impression on me for the rest of my life…It was hard to make out at first, but after I did I was in complete shock, almost completely frozen.
>
> It was a village that had been raided by who I would later learn were [extremist] Islamists. There was a baby just laying there on a dirt road with its throat cut…the blood was dry. Its dead mother holding it was starting to come apart. I quickly turned the movie off in horror. (Autoethnography, 2009, p. 4)

While he doesn't approach his parents about what he saw, he starts seeking out literature, including *The Last Summer of Reason*. Much like my conversations with my own extended family, Hamid begins collecting fragments of stories from his more vocal extended family members and friends of family:

> Most of my knowledge [of Algeria] that wasn't from *The Last Summer of Reason* came from my uncles and my dad's friends, who didn't see a reason to keep me from what was going on in my home country…It was just me and my uncle downstairs late at night just talking and joking…We got to talking about politics, and he told me that [Algeria] had gone down the tubes from where it used to be…at first he was reluctant to say more, so I kept pressing him, and eventually he gave in. (p. 8)

What his uncle comes to narrate is a shocking, devastating story of a party he had attended in Algeria to celebrate a friend's son's circumcision. It took place in "a real high end fancy hotel party room" with 80 guests in attendance (p. 9). When his uncle approaches the father and six-year old son to congratulate them, a man standing nearby "pulls out a machete and the next thing that happened was that the kid, dad, and kid's uncle's heads were rolling on the ground. The other three [men nearby] pulled out submachine guns and mowed down about sixty people while screaming 'Allah u Akbar' (God is Great)" (p. 9). Hamid's uncle was able to escape by hiding in nearby shrubs for the next three hours.

Hamid never approaches his parents about these stories, though he undoubtedly suspects his parents had their own narratives of similar terrors witnessed during their years in Algeria. For such a young child, especially, Hamid's silence over these years is remarkable. Louise Kaplan, in *No voice is ever wholly lost* (1996), discusses how

parents' refusal to speak of that trauma—or perhaps their inability to—elicits from the child a caretaking response, creating a "disproportionate space that the parent occupies in the child's mind" (O'Loughlin, 2010, pp. 12-13). And in this way, the "parentified child" learns to suppress his/her own possibility of expressing a desire for his/her own growth and wellbeing in hopes of securing instead the future of the parent (p. 13). This effect captures and explains why Hamid would not approach his parents for explanation of the video he saw or stories he heard: "the incapacity for dialogue on the parent's part…results in an unhealthy 'precocious attunement' (Kaplan, 1996, p. 226) on the child's part" (O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 13). Kaplan continues, "Because of these abrupt and unexpected derailments in dialogue, the child becomes a witness to what happened to the parent" (1996, p. 227).

Hamid's "precocious attunement" is manifested in his later study of fundamentalist Islam over the next few years, taking him from a self-described all American 6th grader to "a very religious, political, and self-reserved" high schooler (p. 12). He convinces his 8th grade librarian to purchase over one hundred dollars worth of books related to Osama Bin-Laden, September 11th, the hijackers, and "groups deemed 'terrorist' organizations by the government" (p. 10). He writes, "The first time I brought home an English translation of the Qur'an, I made sure I would keep it hidden from my parents" (pp. 8-9). But his parents catch on and are visibly upset by their oldest son's research, and at one point his dad says to him: "'Why don't you go play more sports and read some cool novels like the rest of your buddies?'" Hamid thinks, "None of my buddies were in the position I was in. They were all white Americans, born in America. They had nothing to worry about" (p. 9).

Over the next year, Hamid begins accessing internet resources, including Arabic news sources. He starts questioning American journalists' representation of events in Iraq and critically analyzing FOX news footage. About this period, he writes, "this [research] created rebellion in me, seeing my people killed and humiliated, so I decided

to visit some of what you would call more radical Muslim websites," including the video footage of the beheading of American contractor, Eugene Armstrong (p. 11). It is at this point in his identity development that he "didn't know who to side with, the country [he] was living in pretty much [his] whole life or the people that looked just like [him], spoke [his] language, shared [his] culture, and followed [his] religion" (p. 11).

Hamid's identification with extreme sects of Islam demonstrates a particular kind of ego defense, one that connects him to the aggressors, those who hurt his family and caused the traumatic psychic break of his family's narrative. In the psychoanalytic theory of identification with the aggressor, an individual controls and manages fears of domination evoked by an aggressor by becoming like him or her, and in doing so, is transformed with the self-perceived power of the feared aggressor (Freud, 1936/1966). This form of identification, like others, is related to identity development and defenses. As a defense, identification involves a response to an emotional conflict. Children, in particular, resort to identification defenses in an attempt to resolve conflict inherent in an intensely threatening relationship, as the child may otherwise lack the resources to seek out protection. In Hamid's case, it seems plausible that by identifying with the aggressor-- fundamentalist Muslims-- he defends himself against the helplessness he felt as a Muslim in America who identified as neither wholly Muslim nor American. Britzman writes, "the ego introjects the powerful Other and at least in phantasy, can then meet the Other now as more powerful because in the logic of emotions the powerful other is destroyed through its incorporation" (2006, p. 52). By identifying with the aggressor, Hamid, as a recipient of intergenerationally transmitted trauma, also defends himself from his inability to protect his parents in post-9/11 America, where Hamid's mother and father find themselves facing old threats many miles and years removed from their Algerian roots: "The identification with this unspoken knowledge telescopes generational time and traps the person in an unconscious identification with

the suffering of that parent or even an earlier ancestor whose trauma the parent had inherited" (O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 12).

Bringing Home the Strange and Spectral

As I've discussed in earlier chapters, identification is a means to maintain a lost emotional tie, and in Hamid's case, his identification with that which is strange and spectral, the haunting narratives of violence inflicted by fundamentalist Islamists in his country of origin, connect him to his parents' suffering, however disembodied and removed that connection may seem. By identifying with the aggressor's acts of violence—and justifications for that violence—passivity is transformed to activity: Hamid did not *literally* want to be like the aggressors, though through identification with their power he is able to deflect his own anxieties of helplessness, both his own and his parents'.

In my own story, I, too, brought the strange and spectral home to rest when, at age sixteen, I took on or reclaimed my biological father's last name. My stepfather had recently returned from in-treatment drug rehabilitation, only to promptly relapse and terrorize the rest of us in an amphetamine-induced psychotic break. My mother at the time was committed to seeing it through, in spite of his sadistic episodes, as she had been convinced by friends in Al-Anon that addiction was a disease like cancer, one that should evoke sympathy rather than judgment. I, however, struggled to extend such sympathies to my stepfather, a man to whom I had never felt connected, which only fueled the fire in our increasingly hostile home.

One evening I was babysitting my three younger siblings while my parents attempted to reconcile on a date. My sister, a precocious ten-year old who was no doubt trying to impress her older sister, declared that she knew the code to crack her father's briefcase. After showing off her skills, we rifled through his stack of private papers, some of which were from his time in drug treatment, one of which was a letter

from him to my mother. It was dated months earlier, likely part of his treatment process of "making amends," and in it he described how his drug addiction was a way for him to cope with the guilt of having an affair. While it was clear to me that my mother did not know about the affair, it was much less clear to me whether or not I should be the one to tell her. Ultimately, while nothing would have pleased me more than to throw him under the bus by divulging his indiscretion, I decided it was his responsibility to talk to my mom.

A few nights later, a Monday, he came home from work tense and agitated. Immediately he went into a rage when he saw that I had not finished my laundry. "You're a liar," he hissed at me. I calmly turned toward him, stared him down, and coolly replied, "No. You're the liar."

Something in my tone shook him. He dragged me out to the deck and into the cold night's air to demand to know what I knew. I refused and went back inside. He followed, pursued, and paced back and forth enough for my mom's concern to be piqued. She came upstairs and asked what was going on. Again, I refused to talk. After a weighted silence, she looked at me and asked, "Does this have to do with an affair?" I didn't need to explain.

While the two of them fought, I closed the doors to my siblings' bedrooms to keep their sleep undisturbed before coming back downstairs to watch the show unfold. In a most theatrical fashion, my mother tore up each of their wedding photos and flushed her diamond wedding ring down the toilet. In a particularly pathetic move, my stepfather sat on the floor, crying, while fumbling with a roll of scotch tape in an effort to patch them back together. At the end of the night, my mother hugged me reassuringly and said, "From here on out, it's just us."

But by morning her tune had changed. She kissed my stepfather before he left for work. This time, *she* didn't need to explain.

A few weeks later I signed up to take the ACT exam. In spite of abysmal high school grades, I was more determined than ever to go to college, if only to move on from my parents' house. The week of the exam the guidance counselor pulled me into his office to tell me there was a problem with my registration, that the last name of my social security card, Maybaum, did not match the name I went by, my stepfather's. Turned out my mother never legally changed my last name after marrying my stepfather; she simply taught me to call myself by his name before I was old enough to know better. Because it would have cost several hundred dollars to legally change my name to my stepfather's—and because I loathed him—I simply told the guidance counselor to change my school records to reflect my biological father's last name, and that I would start using it regularly in school and beyond from that day forward, which I did. Both practically and personally, it felt like the right decision.

The day I told my parents, I was kicked out of the house. I was sixteen. That was the last time I lived with my mother.

But I kept that last name, the name that, come to find out, I had never lost. Notably, my later identification with it, much like Hamid's identification with radical Islam, does not represent the desire to connect to the literal object, the father, or, in Hamid's case, the fundamentalist religion. Britzman writes,

> Identifications compose one's internal world and the solutions one needs there. They are a psychical representation made from the impulses and their fragmenting qualities make this ego defense complex. Identifications are partial and incomplete…a desire to keep the Other in mind, to repair what phantasy breaks, and to understand the Other's vulnerability. (2006, p. 50)

Just as Hamid's father is both enraged and frightened by his son's sudden fascination with radical Islam, my mother was both enraged and likely frightened by my taking up and reclaiming of my father's name. Both first-born children, each made to bear the family's wishes and silences, Hamid and I instead reanimated a past that was meant to be hidden, perhaps altogether forgotten.

Yet in each case, both Hamid's and my own, our identifications were more a means of maintaining a lost connection to our present parents than those never-known apparitions of the past. The last name of my father evokes not a father but the *fantasy* of my mother as an idealistic romantic, a time in which it really was just the two of us, at least for a short while. By taking my father's last name, I protect myself from the *reality* of my mother, who, when not completely distant, is entirely critical, always presenting the trace of a threat to withdraw her love altogether. As discussed earlier, in the psychoanalytic theory of identification with the aggressor, an individual controls and manages fears of domination evoked by an aggressor by becoming like him or her, and in doing so, is transformed with the self-perceived power of the feared aggressor (Freud, 1936/1966).

Perhaps it becomes obvious then that the aggressor, in this case, is neither my biological father nor my stepfather, though both easy and obvious enough scapegoats. A psychoanalytic reading of my own present life—as an English teacher, like my mother; as a mother of four, like my mother—seems to suggest that I have unconsciously set up a life to mirror my mother's, perhaps as a way of identifying with her and, in doing so, protecting myself from her power to withdraw her love from me.

This is to say that my narrative, like Hamid's, suggests a fundamental part of the process of identity work in both education and psychoanalysis, which is to make and accept something strange, something alien, as one's own. By bringing the strange home, we garner a sense of agency by cobbling together various identity components, including those spectral stories of the past and our current narratives of ourselves, so that what is understood as the past continues to provide the link to the present and the future.

Critical Autoethnography as Boundary Crossing

In the final part of Hamid's autoethnography, he situates his own narrative within larger questions and considerations of education. He writes, "Even today I sometimes have trouble with deciding who is right and who is wrong when it comes to Palestine and Israel, the war in Iraq along with methods of war used against U.S. troops, and political ties between the U.S. and the Muslim world" (2009, p. 11). Regarding his relationship to his parents, he writes, "I don't think we will ever agree on everything concerning [these issues], but I think I have a much better understanding of what is really going on, including both side of the spectrum, because I got to look at things from both extremes" (p. 11). He later extends this experience to his view of education, which "would be much more meaningful if students were taught multiple sides to every story…[to prepare students] not simply by teaching solutions to problems but by teaching them to ask the questions" (p. 12). Reflecting upon his identity development and his final argument for critical vigilance in education, including an emphasis on questioning and multiple viewpoints, Hamid describes himself currently as "a mutt," that this is his "true" self, the culmination of all of these sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory identities: "This is the reason I am comfortable with who I am now, because I have found a lot of answers to explain to me why I am here, where I came from, and where I want to go from here" (p. 12).

Hamid's critical autoethnography presents the possibility for a critical pedagogy that includes multicultural discourses without premising those discourses on reason alone. Through autoethnography, he pieces together the artifacts of his literacy history—those fragmented and spectral family stories; the captivating and reverberating faces of his homeroom teacher, his classmates, his father, and the light-skinned Muslim on the screen; the radical Muslim websites, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *The Last Summer of Reason*, the Qur'an—and he comes to understand his identity as a "mutt," a hybrid. In this way, Hamid takes up the autoethnographer's role as a boundary-crosser,

experiencing a multiplicity of identities characteristic of the larger postmodern context out of which autoethnography emerges. As discussed in the Literature Review, autoethnography, as the researcher's desire to unearth and account for the worldview of others, reflects a postmodern stance in which there is no monolithic Truth, and multiple viewpoints are acknowledged and valued. Hamid never attempts to reconcile these multiple, at times, contradictory identities but to frame them in terms of his own critical vigilance and agency. In this way, tantamount to autoethnography is the recognition of the researcher as representative of a multilayered reality, itself worthy of expression.

In his discussion of what he terms "evocative pedagogy," O'Loughlin (2010) writes that educators should "create opportunities with [students] to evoke the spectral memory of both past injury and ancestral knowledge in the service of allowing [the students] to full identify with the origins of their own unconscious coming-to-be" (p. 14). I argue that critical autoethnography offers up one such opportunity, as evidenced by Hamid's writing, to anchor personal narrative in the historical, familial, and spiritual stories of students' lives, offering up "an alternative to a life haunted by an unnamable past" (O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 16).

Critical autoethnography is one way for us as teachers and students to engage with the unconscious knowledge of our lives, including those "silent spectral realms of unanchored anguish and lost possibility" (p. 15). It is a way of regenerating what was lost in the foreclosing of our social, cultural, and/or familial narratives, and reclaiming historical subjectivities and identities.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

> I can imaginatively reconstruct links between known experiences that, at a
> minimum, provide me with an imaginary narrative of my life that "explains" my
> sense of loss and that names the unnamable, free-floating worry I experience
> when I leave myself free enough of intellectual pursuits to allow it to the
> surface.
>
> The crux is that all writing it autobiographical. I am no longer willing to hide
> myself in my writing because that makes me feel like an imposter.
>
> <div align="right">Michael O'Loughlin, The Subject of Childhood</div>

This research has been my attempt to root my own identity development in the desires that drive my teaching, including the conscious and unconscious demands my commitment to critical pedagogy places on my students, and how my students' desires create moments of collision and collusion, resistance and transference, in the critical classroom. By taking up a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography as method, I sought to linger in the vulnerable, nonrational dimensions of education to "formulate theories of learning that can tolerate the human's capacity for its own extremes and its mistakes, resistance, belatedness, demands, and loss without creating more harm" (Britzman, 1998, p. 19).

This approach was not an intuitive one for me, as many of my own narratives of becoming were premised on stark ruptures or crises in identity, moments of transformation marked by strengthened commitments to identity investments, the very same premises underpinning discourses of critical pedagogy and its emphasis on rationality as proof of critical consciousness. It was only by means of a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography that I was able to make the reflective turn to account for the nonrational currents of the critical classroom, including those moments of subjectivity, desire, and pleasure that complicate

education's dream of mastery-- and the critical pedagogue's dream of identity

transformation, her own and her students.'

And so it is to reinscribe the *uncertainty* of this process, both the writing of this

dissertation and the broader work of teaching and learning, that I open this final chapter

in Michael O'Loughlin's passage from *The Subject of Childhood* (2009), which

foregrounds the autobiographical impulse in every piece of writing, and the

imaginative, uncertain narratives we create for ourselves as temporary anchors in the

spectral, silent past. The narratives chronicled and analyzed here are neither means to

an end nor ends in themselves but rather serve as horizon lines, those temporal, elusive,

and oftentimes obscured markers that make us recognizable within the larger lay of the

land, at least momentarily.

An emphasis on uncertainty is also suggested in the recursive organization of

this research, including the ways my own literacy history and identity development is

interwoven with my students,' interlaced to suggest the tangled, displaced, and personal

ways we go about this messy work of the classroom. By organizing this research

recursively, I sought to illuminate the nonlinearity of what Deborah Britzman (1998)

describes as the "ego's learning," which is "entangled in its capacity to touch and to be

touched":

> We are not concerned with positing stages or chronology, for in psychoanalytic
> method more than one chronology occupies the same space, and because of that
> ambivalence, we can old two opposite understandings precisely in the same
> place. We become torn. (p. 12)

By refracting my students' histories of literacy and learning through my own history of

literacy and learning, I was able to forge new identifications with the three participant

narratives chronicled here, as well as new ways of thinking about my own history of

learning, the people, places, and stories loved and lost along the way. And in doing so,

I was better able to linger in my own ambivalence throughout this research, resisting

the urge to neatly tie up loose ends and to offer up with certainty prescriptive conclusions.

Yet my ability to linger in the uncertainties of this research does little to assuage my very real concerns, in an era of accountability such as ours, that teachers and students cannot be equally vulnerable in their narrative accounts in the classroom. Very real, too, is my ongoing fear of the traces that writing leaves behind. As I discussed last chapter, writing, in my life and in the life of my mother, included risk. It left a trace of our inner desires and those shadowed identities that were clearly not welcomed into the family's public space. This concern has carried over into the process of writing this dissertation.

In particular, I must consider how my record here introduces new risks. There is the risk it poses to me and my relationship with the family members I've chronicled in these pages: "Once again, it is words that bind us together and keep us apart" (Silin, 2003, p. 266). While my writing could offer up an opportunity for dialogue, a chance to describe, explain, and perhaps legitimize my perspective, it could just as easily alienate me from those I love most. The writing of this research also poses potential risks to the student-participants who offered up their stories, particularly in an era when citizens can be turned into enemies of the state by way of their narrative accounts. Students have reasons to resist such personal accounts as a way of defending themselves against a loss or the sense of being lost, and in turn, as teachers we must embrace their resistance and the conflicts that arise from it (p. 266).

Psychoanalysis is a tool with which to account for and make sense of these cases of resistance. By pairing psychoanalysis with autoethnography, as teachers we are better able to meet the uncertainties, complexities, and fears of loss in teaching and learning. Notably this method does not offer up a cure, outcome, or the security of certainty; it will not assuage our fears. But it does offer up a way of going about education that accounts for its inherent risks: "The work of education must be a

working through of education. For this work to begin, the story of education must pass through…the ethnographic, the reflective, and the uncanny" (Britzman, 1998, p. 19). By considering the meaningful fictions of ourselves as teachers, we are better able to reflect upon those ways we need our students, the ways we return to the classroom to work through our own psychic entanglements, as manifested in our pedagogies and relationships with students.

In offering up autoethnographic narratives of my own identity development, I was better able to account for how my own meaningful fictions of myself as transformed and strengthened through crisis shaped the unconscious identifications I have with discourses of critical pedagogy, particularly its emphasis on identity overhaul, enlightened testimony, and changed consciousness. These identifications set up the unconscious demands I then placed on students' narrative arcs, oftentimes leading to moments of resistance, transference, and counter-transference in the classroom.

At the same time, I want to emphasize that this research is not a developmental narrative, one that includes a story of myself as fundamentally changed through the work of analysis. Even as I conclude this work, able to account for the oversights and issues in discourses of critical pedagogy, I am equally aware of my ongoing relationship with it, how I continue to need and invest in aspects of critical pedagogy: The stories I tell myself about myself—as a feminist, student, academic, and mother— continue to hinge on the heroic narrative arc of the underdog. I still see myself as someone transformed through crises, emerging strengthened and more vigilant on the other side. These markers continue to act as the horizon lines of my life, allowing me to see myself in similar narrative arcs, including those of students, such as Hamid's. In this way, "more than one chronology occupies the same space, and because of that ambivalence, [I] can hold two opposite understandings precisely in the same place. [I] become torn (Britzman, 1998, p. 12).

Ultimately, this research posits that the history of the unconscious plays out in the classroom, and that as teachers, through psychoanalytically-informed autoethnography, we are better able to enact reflective practices in the classroom, ones that consider the relationship between the psychic and the social through a more thorough accounting of our own desires, loves, and losses. By considering how our particular pedagogical and relational investments in the classroom include new editions of old conflicts, a repetition of our own history of learning in the guise of new methods, practices, and relationships, we are better able to risk certainty, rationality, and proof of progress for more ethical relationships with our students.

Return to Research Questions and Broader
Implications

Early in this research process, I sought to examine how participants take up, resist, and embrace the critical lenses of the course. In doing so, I traced the emotional ties I have to particular narratives. For educators, there is an ethical obligation to explore these unconscious narrative investments we bring with us to the work of teaching, and how they shape the kinds of demands we make on our students. As in the case of this research, oftentimes that exploration begins in moments of tension, of resistance and misrecognition, in which the teacher fails to recognize herself in her students. In those moments of misrecognition, we are, as Deborah Britzman (1998) suggests, obligated to explore "that other story, the story of one's own otherness" (p. 16).

That is what I sought to do in this research. In the case of Paul, in examining my own relationship to fundamentalist Christianity, including the ways it represents to me an antithesis or otherness to my identity as a liberal feminist, I ultimately—and strangely-- encountered myself. Underlying the discourses of critical pedagogy in which I had invested, as well as the discourses of Christianity in which Paul had

invested, was a particular kind of fundamentalism, an expectation of transformation, and an assumption of truth. By entering into and engaging the kinds of resistance with which Paul met my critical curriculum, as well as the ways I resisted his insistence on framing his narratives for the class in terms of his identity as a Christian, I was able to better understand resistance as engagement, those ways that Paul and I needed each other to confirm the stories we told to ourselves about ourselves. Britzman (1998) writes, "Perhaps we can even observe in our own educational experiences traces of these lost subjects and their uncanny return, their coming back in the form of contested objects" (p. 16). To enter into those moments of resistance by narrating our own history of learning alongside our students' is to gain insight into what motivates our pedagogy, and how our pedagogy runs the risk of speaking for rather than with our students.

Similarly, in Abigail's resistance and eventual apathy, I found myself. As a "contested object" or source of conflict, she dredged up my own history of not-learning in the face of an authoritative, tyrannical teacher. Her refusal to take up the critical components of the class contained within it an implicit threat to my identity as a critical pedagogue, as a "good" teacher who prioritizes dialogue over monologue. By laying my own narrative of not-learning alongside hers, I was able to account for the ways I needed Abigail, a student with whom I strongly identified, to mirror my own relationship to critical inquiry as a positive, empowering one, if only to preserve my teacher's ego. For her to remain apathetic or, worse, to actively not-learn was to me an indication I had become that which I feared most: a tyrannical teacher whose authoritative classroom presence silenced the smart, thoughtful kind of student I had been, the kind I had supposed Abigail to be. Ultimately, through a psychoanalytic autoethnography of my own history of learning, I was able to see how I needed Abigail to confirm a story I told myself about myself, a horizon line to reassure me of my place in the larger landscape of the critical classroom. My later ambivalence toward her had

everything to do with my own fantasies of myself as a particular type of teacher, including the vulnerability I experienced when that fantasy was challenged by Abigail's apathy.

To extend the implications of these cases beyond my own personal grappling with student resistance and engagement, I argue that as teachers we must concern ourselves with these kinds of vulnerabilities to "formulate theories of learning that can tolerate the human's capacity for its own extremes and its mistakes, resistance, belatedness, demands, and loss without creating more harm" (Britzman, 1998, p. 19). To work through our fantasies of love and control, which permeate the classroom, is to

> work through the misrecognition of our own egos, that is the way we take our teacher egos for who we are, and our blindness to our own jouissance and the jouissance of the Other. The working through of the misrecognition provides access to the true nature of the other and simultaneously a means to overcome our own distorted perception. (Taubman, 2006, p. 31)

Just as the best teachers of writing will write with their students, navigating the expectations of their own assignments as their students do, so, too, should they engage in the kind of reflective narrative inquiry that connects the personal to the political, and the psychic to the social. Through a psychoanalytically informed autoethnography, teachers of writing can locate their pedagogical investments in the broader personal and historical trajectory of their literacy lives, enabling them to better account for the ways that past conflicts re-emerge and circulate in the classroom through identifications, transferences, countertransferences, and resistances in the tangled work of teaching and learning.

There are, too, those moments of emotional mirroring in the classroom, instances in which the pedagogical investments of the teacher are taken up and engaged by students for whom the curriculum resonates their own identity investments and

desires. In the case of my identification with Hamid, a student who took up and engaged the critical discourses of the class to complicate and deepen his understanding of his identity as a Muslim-American, and to articulate his own theory of identity hybridity, I recognized myself again. But in this case, identification was a joyful process that reflected back to me how critical inquiry can offer students the language of critique in empowering ways, the same ways it had worked in my own life as I refined my voice as a feminist, academic, and critical educator. Rather than interfering with the aims of education, in this case emotional mirroring and the desire for recognition supported them. Hamid was able and willing to take up the critical discourses of the class, allowing him to maintain and even to strengthen his identity as a hybrid, a "mutt," as well as to theorize the constructedness of that identity within the historical backdrop of post-9/11 United States and cultural backdrop of a Muslim-American family. Through this process, our identities were recognized by one another, and the critical component of autoethnography worked to strengthen rather than foreclose each of our identity investments.

Through a psychoanalytically informed autoethnography, I was able to locate my joyful identification with Hamid in my own literacy history, within which my identity, much like Hamid's, was haunted by the spectral stories of an unnamable past. And similar to Hamid, I, too, turned to reading to recuperate what was lost in my family's silence. In both cases, the 'critical' lenses of critical autoethnography were generated by the artifacts of our unique literacy histories: old letters, family stories, weighted silences, images, apparitions, and annotations. Unlike the critical of critical pedagogy, which oftentimes overvalues the lenses of race, class, and gender as the only

legitimate and productive routes of inquiry, the critical lenses of autoethnography emerged organically from the already-present patterns and connections we found meaningful in the stories of our own literacy lives, particularly those artifacts that continued to haunt us years after their discovery.

More broadly, each participant's autoethnography illuminates ways of reconceiving criticality that are not premised on evidence or proof of a changed, enlightened consciousness. Hamid's critical autoethnography, in particular, demonstrates how the methodology of autoethnography enables a researcher to hold multiple truths, multiple identities, together. And while Paul's autoethnography includes a narrative of transformation linked to his faith in a singular truth, his identity investments as a conservative Christian were not foreclosed in the process, which is oftentimes not the case in discourses of critical pedagogy that prioritize the lenses of race, class, and gender at the expense of other ways of reading the world.

In this way, both critical autoethnography and psychoanalysis as methods of inquiry expand notions of criticality by accounting for the nonrational desires that shape our identities and investments in teaching and learning. While critical pedagogy over-relies on logic and reason as proof of critical consciousness, both psychoanalysis and autoethnography enabled me as a teacher and researcher to resist the logical, linear, and goal-oriented demands of critical pedagogy. And unlike discourses of critical pedagogy that fail to implicate the desires and identity investments of the teacher, a psychoanalytically informed critical autoethnography enabled me to foreground them, instigating new identifications with my students, and prompting me to engage in a more

reflexive practice, one that includes multiples ways of understanding criticality in the composition classroom.

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