My late parents, James and Margaret Howell
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THE PLAGIARISM TURN: DIGITAL SAVAGERY AND TEXTUAL TRICKSTERISM

By

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Chair: Sidney I. Dobrin
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The major interrogation throughout this project centers on the affective components of plagiarism accusations and the accompanying confusion about how to negotiate plagiaristic practices. Social media and other forms of digital compositions greatly inform adolescent textual practices. Studies such as the National Student Engagement Survey and various Pew Research Center findings paint a picture of emerging writers who use mobile technologies and are immersed in online environments that challenge the presuppositions about composition that have been traditionalized by print culture.

The contemporary study of plagiarism has experienced two major “waves” of scholarship, which began in earnest with the publication of Rebecca Moore Howard’s Standing in the Shadow of Giants. The first wave investigated the theoretical and pedagogical complications involved in the concept of plagiarism, while the second wave focused primarily on qualitative and quantitative data collection as well as addressing plagiarism across the disciplines. This project calls for a third “wave” of plagiarism scholarship that revisits those initial theoretical conversations in light of the rise of social media and digital literacy practices.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In Media Res

I have an important story to tell you.

It begins….Rather, I began much like the prayer of an atheist, a plea, or even “the last hope of a desperate man” as a semi-famous television character once said. The I here is not the writer but me, the dissertation. The writer hates me. She hates you too. She and I have struggled against and with each other for years. In fact, I was a longtime companion of hers, way before she sat down and conjured me up into this document for your pleasure or your pain. You can decide which nouns best represent your experience after you have read my story.

My story begins years ago but really I was always there. A dissertation on plagiarism, which is what I am, seems rather banal given the decades-long, even centuries-long conversations about what is meant by this concept. In the next chapter I'll discuss the term’s etymology, especially its origins in the word “kidnap”; however, plagiarism is more than a term. It's a gesture and it’s a story. The story of plagiarism is as interesting as my own. I am an I, so I have to claim some narcissism here.

Before we begin in earnest, I want to preface my story with an anecdote. While anecdotal evidence grants little in terms of conclusions, it acts to lay out an emotional frame of reference for the cognitive work ahead. And emotion, or affect, is essential to understanding this story and this study of plagiarism. I grew out of years of reading and conversation. I started as an examination of fandom practices and then, when that conversation appeared too boutique or irrelevant, I morphed or mutated into a larger reflection on the change in textual practices that have occurred, specifically with
reference to the American college classroom, especially in relation to how students in an internetworked world live in a textual environment that encourages the wide dissemination and utilization of texts. Fandom gave birth to me; plagiarism named me. From fandom came the question of ownership, and ownership led to authorship, and authorship beget plagiarism. I make no great claims for this work. It is a work in progress and for the writer, in particular, it is a work of resistance.

I resist plagiarism as accusation. I resist plagiarism as crime. I resist plagiarism as sin. I resist plagiarism as error. I resist plagiarism as mutation.

I embrace plagiarism as opportunity. I embrace plagiarism as conversation. I embrace plagiarism as foil. I embrace plagiarism as unnatural. I embrace plagiarism as a ghost story.

And so I have an important story to tell you. It’s a horror story, in part.

**Stories and Histories**

The story of plagiarism begins with a gesture. The gesture is the simple hand wave between two agents, two actors, two potential property owners. The story of plagiarism is the story of language without communication. Moreover, the story of plagiarism is the story of language.

I made a fairly bold statement, didn’t I? Why? Those decades-, centuries-long discussions of plagiarism begin from two unchallenged warrants – that language is an externalizable product of an individual’s intent, of a private intentionality that belongs to the language user, over which the sender can have ownership; that language can fully represent conscious thought and make it available to the world; and therefore that the *I* can make itself available to the world. But language is a technology. That is the counter-warrant upon which I base myself. And that presumptive warrant also values
technology’s ability to replicate and be replicable, or to use the fancy term from Derrida’s deconstruction, reiterative. If language, then, is a technology and plagiarism is a form of replication, then one might posit that plagiarism is an integral part of this technology. Plagiarism is not some act of contraband smuggling of language into language. Rather, plagiarism is an ordinary act of language use, embedded in language’s cogs and wheels, just like punctuation, clauses, parts of speech, and other mechanical functions of language. Now, citation, that’s a different story, and we’ll get to that in a bit.

But this is the story I want you to know. I am a ghost. I am an apparition. I am plagiarizing and plagiarized. Even when I insert those parenthetical references and point you, like a hyperlink, to the source, there are other sources I have never seen that may say the same exact thing, other ghosts that speak the same concepts. For every source I make visible to you, there are a multitude of other sources that are not cited and that perhaps were never written down to be cited, but this possibility, indeed this likelihood, does not mean they don’t exist. Plagiarism is language. Citation is an addendum technology of language. Yet, unlike Stanley Fish, I will not argue that plagiarism is a crime of citation ignorance, nor will I, like Richard Posner, posit that plagiarism is an existential crisis of a contemporary historical moment. In all honesty, anyone who has lingered in the threads of conversations about plagiarism would be hard-pressed to make either argument.

All ghost stories are stories of the transient agent. All ghost stories begin in the pronominal.
You and I and All the Space In Between

You. Pronouns are interesting things. So far I’ve written I, you, me, she and I don’t regret this choice. Pronouns are the silent philosophers of language. Pronominals, as the linguists call them, shift and change and function differently in every language. She and I found this out because, as you will discover later on in the introduction, plagiarism scholarship situates itself in partly in multilanguage pedagogy and that study of pronouns situates itself in, amusingly enough, situational modeling.

Pronouns are akin to measurements; they appraise the distance between the written agent and the reader’s attention span. But more so they are ownership markers in absentia. I’ve told her this but she scoffs. I also told her one of the chapters should focus on pronouns, and she cried.

Sometimes I like to make her cry.

Pronouns are also intimate things. They presume a familiarity between us (there we go again); they reveal the contract of reference. They also reveal language’s dependency. And it is so very dependent. Language is the continuum, the matrix, the hidden operating system, of the social contract. Yet pronouns are also ways of reading, “Previous behavioural and neuroimaging data demonstrate that linguistic cues, such as pronouns, encourage readers to differentially adopt perspectives during reading” (Brunye et al, 660). Why insert an obscure piece of scholarship here? Because Brunye, among others, studies pronoun usage as a way to understand how readers experience a text. Calling upon the text as a “situational model,” Brunye, et al. offer the pronoun as an access point to narrative, especially in how the reader sees the pronoun. Pronouns foreground the question: Where and when does the reader experience the agent in some emotional way and how?
I’ve wandered again. She hates when I do that, by the way.

Suffice to say, language depends on the appearance of agreement, and one of the stubborn “clauses” of language, especially our Western ones, is the singular space. And by “clause” I mean a legal metaphor, not the linguistic unit. The I, the you, the me are little acres of ownership, intellectual properties per se, and we produce things from it. The I speaks out into the world from one space and another I hears you from your acre next door. These two metaphors do work, the legal and the land, because legal documents most often emerge from property arrangements.

Pronouns. Proprietary. Progression. The prefix, pro-, means forward and implies motion. The root of property, -per, means straightforward, moving forward. Property contains within it the most poignant irony – to propertize is to stabilize for profit. It’s the act of owning motion. Again, I make this observation because it provides further evidence of the deeply complex notions upon which we rest our assumptions. Property and plagiarism are connected because to plagiarize requires an idea and the language used to communicate it to have been made into a property.

The Argument #1: A Digital Apocalypse

Plagiarism is authorship. To plagiarize is to write.

Most of the scholarship around plagiarism has acted to hide this simple claim. In the second chapter I will delve more deeply into the literature review that supports this study but for now I will lay out a brief overview of key works that have led me to this claim.

To plagiarize is to make explicit that writing has become property.
In the past twenty-five years, plagiarism studies has emerged as a subset of composition or writing studies. I prefer the name “writing studies” because, as Dobrin argues in *Post Composition*, composition carries a lot of baggage with it. In particular, the teaching of writing, or pedagogy, has overshadowed writing scholarship; literary theory or literary studies has traditionally tackled the concepts of authorship and language play, which the theoretical study of plagiarism slots well within, as will be noted in the literature review, Marilyn Randall’s *Pragmatic Plagiarism* and Richard Dyer’s *Pastiche*.

To study writing is to study plagiarism. For every rule or procedure or even concept that defines the term writing, one must look and study what is being defined outside those boundaries. Plagiarism is ultimately about the boundaries we have set for writing and how those boundaries are being tested and challenged by contemporary technologies and epistemologies. What we have traditionally thought of as writing has mutated and evolved, as all living systems are wont to do. Moreover, as digital technologies have opened up ways of composing and writing that heretofore had been unavailable to humans, the boundaries of what it means to write and the ways in which one can be a writer have drastically changed. And those changes have further altered what we value about writing.

I argue that the study of plagiarism has simple, theoretical questions which can help us to approach talking about writing and inform writing studies. While questions about plagiarism, as we will see, materialize from questions about authorship, authority, and reference, we can abstract these inquiries to more comprehensive questions about how, where, and when writing takes place in an increasingly digital environment that
has unfastened itself from print based beliefs about texts and writing. There are ways to see this inevitable break that digital technology has introduced.

For example, in a 2011 survey of college presidents, the Pew Center found that “Most college presidents (55%) say that plagiarism in students’ papers has increased over the past 10 years. Among those who have seen an increase in plagiarism, 89% say computers and the internet have played a major role” (http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/08/28/the-digital-revolution-and-higher-education/). This statistic sets up a conversation about how technology and technology use is being defined by authority figures who shape and direct institutions of higher education.

The survey does not include the ages of the presidents but it does note that a majority of them are “tech-savvy” because of their use of technology such as smartphones. Indeed, 87% of the presidents surveyed acknowledged using smartphones while interestingly only 32% used Facebook and even fewer (18%) used Twitter. Pew’s research reveals an undisclosed prejudice that both the researchers and the presidents demonstrate about ways in which technology is deployed. The findings or questions focus on asking adults and college presidents their perceptions about a number of technology issues, including plagiarism. It was a large sampling with over 1100 participants.

In another research study conducted in the same year about the use of technology among teenagers, Pew published that “Fully 95% of all teens ages 12-17 are now online and 80% of those online teens are users of social media sites. Many log on daily to their social network pages and these have become spaces where much of the social activity of teen life is echoed and amplified—in both good and bad ways”
The “bad ways” in this study focused on bullying, which had reached a zenith point in cultural conversation after the deaths of a number young people had been connected to online harassment and bullying. This study and subsequent studies that have been published by Pew and others hint at how complex the online lives are that adolescences experience.

Danah Boyd in *It’s Complicated* argues that the anxiety that parents and educators feel towards the restrictions of online lives is unfounded. Boyd is a researcher with Microsoft Research Social Media Division and works with other scholars, such as Nancy Baym. Microsoft describes its social media mission in the following way:

> Our interdisciplinary teams explore many aspects of social media to help us to understand, model, and enable the online experiences of both the present and the future. We study online behavior and interactions to help us gain insights into how social and technological forces interact. We also build new forms of online experiences around communities of interest, to gain understanding of how to bring people together. (http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/research-areas/social-media.aspx)

I cite the mission because we must take Boyd’s conclusions into account as part of a corporate goal. The company’s desire to build new online forms for online behavior may well inform Boyd’s thesis. In any case, her study resists the popular anxieties that both teachers and parents express when discussing teenagers and online presence. She tackles each anxiety chapter by chapter, with her strongest work addressing the fear of privacy and exposure. Boyd’s major counterpoint to adult fears about teenagers and
online activity is power. She concludes that while there are dangers present in living complicated online lives, teenagers are more empowered now than they have been since the term “teenager” was coined.

Boyd’s research and thesis do run into some limitations. For example, she never quite fully extends her intuitions about the empowerment of teenagers to explain the anxiety of “adults,” which I would argue is a possible ramification of her findings. She also does not comprehensively tackle the speed of technological advance that widens the gap between adults and adolescents.

In another popular text, Alone Together, Sherry Turkle ends what she considers her trilogy on the personal side of personal computing with a reflection on the isolating nature of technology. Her thesis culminates in two concerns: what she calls “The Robotic Moment” and what she calls the social situation of being “Networked” (18). Her anxiety is an adept translation of a cultural affect that has been in the making for decades, even centuries. This anxiety can be seen in Shelley’s Frankenstein, for instance, which is a fictional treatise on technology’s dangers. The genre of science fiction, in part, relies on technophobia to engage its audience. In her discussions about the Robotic Moment, Turkle’s argument ventures into the inauthenticity narrative, as she examines the avatar-to-avatar construction of using the robot as socializing agent.

Turkle’s work along with the work of others, such as Postman, Bauerlein, and Greenfield, participates in what I would argue is the literature of digital apocalypse. Their work perceives digital technology as altering a naturalized human state that thrives in and depends on interpersonal communication, with the human face as the principal text. But as Deleuze and Guattari intuit in A Thousand Plateaus, the face
stands in as a signifier and ties expression to gesture. The face and all its constituent components – lips, eyes, mouth, nose, ears – act as portals of expression but also act as ways of metaphorizing expression. Perception and sense are deeply present in the experience of the face, which is why the metaphor of sight poses a problem, as does the metaphor of hearing. What happens in the landscape where those metaphors are relegated to a second plateau of expression and instead must serve the robotic moment, as Turkle questions?

Such a concept informs the scholarship of Brian Rotman in *Becoming Beside Ourselves*. Rotman speculates that language only became static with the introduction of the alphabet and that the ongoing digital revolution has fundamentally altered the way we view expression. Much like Deleuze’s concept of faciality and signification, Rotman sees gesture as a primitive evolutionary base operating modality and that all other components are operating systems. In other words, gesture is the DOS to the alphabet’s Windows. Rotman’s text has issues, especially as it depends too heavily on speculation, but his work acts as a counter foil to the digital apocalypse. Rotman, like Jenkins, regards digital forms and forums as evolutionary moments or moves.

Interestingly enough, Henry Jenkins, along with Sam Ford, advocate for companies to utilize the changing online participatory nature of communities instead of clinging to reified concepts of textual ownership and autonomy. In *Spreadable Media*, Jenkins and Ford propose to instruct institutional interests, especially those in entertainment, to take advantage of the evolution in online culture. The work emerges from the fields of fandom and media studies, which have been the contact zones for much of these conversations. Rotman, Jenkins and Ford, Boyd, and others advocate for
the power and possibility of digital social technologies and this advocacy can help to frame how educators and other invested adults, such as administrators and parents, can transform anxiety into anticipation.

Here I will contribute an anecdote from my own experience. I direct a writing program at a mid-level state university. We encounter most of the first-time-in-college students, and the program has a curricular mission that requires adapting our materials each year. Every summer I, along with several colleagues, develop the syllabus for the next academic year. We select readings and create assignments that expect students to reflect on their writing and reading practices. The curriculum is an adaptation of Wardle’s and Downs’s “Writing about Writing” study.

Two summers ago, during our week-long syllabus workshop, we had a conversation about a simple matter: grammar. In our program we assess primary traits and one of those traits is mechanical accuracy. In other words, we count errors. Yes, while counting errors is a problematic approach, the rubric does require students to place some value on grammar. To assure that the rubric aligns with disciplinary standards, we based it on Walvoord’s Common Mistakes in Standard Revised English list, and one of those errors is spelling.

One of my colleagues noted that in his experience, students are making more spelling errors than he had encountered even five years ago and that he didn’t understand why students just didn’t use spellcheck. Then he stopped and started to discuss how more and more of his students were writing their papers on their phones, which has an autocorrect function rather than a spellcheck function. What followed was a long conversation about how to alert students to the functions of the technologies they
use to compose while at the same time not punishing them for using a vast array of forums that are available to them. We then created a survey for all incoming students and one of the questions asked them specifically what their primary mode for writing was. Interestingly, more and more students admit to using their phones or tablets and that has to change the way we describe the revising process for them.

And this anxiety returns us to the Pew Study about college presidents.

One may read that the presidents who are tech savvy enough to use smartphones are not technologically social enough to understand the intertextual habits of their incoming students. And social media spaces function intertextually. Social media is a technology of intertextuality, with its wide range of apparatuses meant to facilitate sharing and borrowing, from the simple act of “liking” a page on Facebook to reblogging posts and images on tumblr to retweeting and quote tweeting on Twitter. In a very real sense, the children who have grown up with social media as a central contact zone for socialization have simultaneously learned writing as intertextuality. Granted, many of these children come from privileged classes that have access to such technologies; they are also the majority of those who will have access to a college or university education.

So the cognitive dissonance between, on one hand, understanding technology as a vehicle for writing as presentation, as shown in the statistics about the college presidents’ use of smartphones, laptops, and tablets; and on the other hand, regarding the intertextual and social dynamic of writing in a social media space becomes clear and poignant. The ethos around writing and what can and cannot be done with words, texts, images, and even moving images creates an astounding gap between those who
are leading the colleges and those who are entering the colleges. At this point, I want to reassert that this is not a solely pedagogical anxiety. As Olson, Dobrin, Sanchez, and other writing scholars have argued, writing studies should not simply restrict itself to pedagogical aims or concerns. I would argue that by viewing plagiarism as an outgrowth of the intertextual ethos, we can have a more inclusive conversation about how accusations of plagiarism and their accompanying institutional distress (from the print based author and the publishing house to the entrenched educational complex) reveal deeper, more fundamental shifts in the way writing is believed to be accomplished.

The use of technology, I would argue, does not automatically equate to the understanding of or even immersion in that technology as a primary means of communication or writing. The issue of perspective must be addressed here, as Bolter does in *Remediation*. For example the digital graphic, which is the principal source of social media and internet text, appears immediately and hence demonstrates what Bolter calls a “transparent immediacy,” which he particularly juxtaposes with photography. Photography has a mechanics and materiality to the process (shutters, lens) that digital graphics almost completely hides: “Digital graphic images are the work of humans, whose agency, however, is often deferred so far from the act of drawing that it seems to disappear” (27). Bolter further explains that both photography and digital imaging erase the human subject of the one taking the picture or creating the image. So in a photographic world, the proprietor of the gaze becomes a ghost, adding another dimension to our own ghost story.

Pew titles the article about the survey “Digital Revolution and Higher Education,” and in so doing frames the information as revolutionary – not in the popular innovative
sense but rather the threatening tone of the barbarians itching to burn down the gate. In this way, the survey compares the college president and the college as the place to be overturned, the leaders to experience the coup d’état. This subtextual thread refers us back to the initial disconnect in the ethos about writing. Technology as revolutionary is a commonly accepted trope in culture, especially Western Culture. We will see this term referred to again in Eisenstein’s work about the printing press and in McLuhan’s arguments about media. However, the idea of revolution is also vacuous because it relies on geographic and national metaphors, which, when extended out become a colonial impetus.

Pew’s study positions the players (presidents and students) in an oppositional state, and in the middle of that opposition, the study reveals that “The public and college presidents differ over the educational value of online courses. Only 29% of the public says online courses offer an equal value compared with courses taken in a classroom. Half (51%) of the college presidents surveyed say online courses provide the same value.” The public’s devaluation of an online education seems contingent on a misunderstanding of or willful disconnect from the expanding and increasingly encompassing virtual landscape that people operate within. The resistance to online education mirrors the same affect that determines how educational institutions regard plagiarism; the resistance is a placeholder for an anxiety that cannot see itself.

And here is the flesh and bone of the matter at hand. The Pew statistics suggest how plagiarism anxiety subtly intertwines itself with the continuing fissure between institutional authority, in this case the authority of colleges and universities, and a generation left to inhabit writing spaces that have become more and more virtual and
intertextual – indeed, that, for the most recent generation of students, has become predominantly virtualized and intertextualized by the range of digital media and their extensions of the human social stage.

Finally, the Pew Study demonstrates how abortive the current conversations about academic integrity and plagiarism are. By confining the discussion to what is seemingly a pragmatic consideration, scholars and others hide the intellectually complex structure from those most affected by the discussion – students and teachers, who are left to wonder how to prevent this illegality and thus how to preserve the integrity of the intellectual ownership that plagiarism threatens. This prevention rhetoric assumes an emergency, a catastrophe, an apocalypse.

**The Argument #2: Institutionalized History**

While the second chapter will more fully examine the history of plagiarism studies, I’d here like to introduce two considerations. First, plagiarism studies has experienced two scholarship “waves.” The first wave of criticism partially becomes official with Howard’s *Standing in the Shadow of Giants*. This wave focused on defining plagiarism in the face of rapidly changing technologies of access and composition. Plagiarism, while studied and noted previously to Howard’s work, took on a level of importance and singularity that has continued through contemporary scholarship. Howard’s work punctuated a time period where plagiarism scholarship was infrequent and diasporic.

I mean here to interrogate Howard’s text as a primary source for plagiarism studies rather than a secondary source that critiques plagiarism. This methodological shift, I would argue, grants the text a historical significance for the field. A historical inquiry allows readers to ask questions about the cultural, economic, and in this case,
pedagogical movements at play that (i) provided space for her analysis to happen and (ii) fostered the conversations that would take place in the wake of its publication. I choose *Standing in the Shadow of Giants* because the book produced a model for understanding plagiarism that had been previously unavailable to researchers and that is “patchwriting.” This concept and term quickly penetrated the discourse around plagiarism and now stands as a neoteric characterization for a type of textual practice that both resembles and dissembles what it means to plagiarize.

With Howard and her concept of patchwriting and accompanying historical overview of plagiarism, the field would emerge initially with what I would reduce to three considerations: What is plagiarism? How do we prevent plagiarism? Why do students, in particular, plagiarize? The questions lead to more complex issues such as authorship, institutional policies and procedures, and pedagogical approaches. However, a quick overview of the first ten years of plagiarism scholarship indicates that this field of inquiry has centered around the just-mentioned three questions.

These questions frame the subsequent scholarship until Howard, again the forerunner of the field, shifts the conversation and sets in motion the second wave, which focuses primarily on three areas: social science research, multilingual learners, and disciplinary discourse. I speculate that the shift happens as the access to education, especially for international students in disciplines other than literature or traditional ‘writing’ fields, tests the previous notions of plagiarism. As we will see in the second chapter, which provides an extensive literature review, there is not a particular date or time period around which the evolution of plagiarism studies happens, but rather the conversations are intertwined from the beginning and these topics or themes simply
take center stage at various points. I use “intertwine” purposefully here because it allows us to discuss how patchwriting is connected to a particular historical metaphor of writing, the metaphor of text as textile and writing as textured.

Throughout the scholarship there has also lurked another set of questions that are more theoretical and large-scale. These questions address how plagiarism works against authorship as well as what the definition and value of plagiarism reveal about the definitions and values we hold about writing. I will argue that the next or third wave of plagiarism studies should return to the theoretical and historical considerations that Howard first introduced in the 1990s. The issues that first pressured scholarship to study plagiarism with more depth still exist and now are amplified by two generations of rapid changes both in technology and educational preparation. As Howard notes in her introduction to *Standing* her study emerged simultaneously with the new work being done in the 1990s about authorship and her own inquiry focuses on authorship’s “cohort, plagiarism” (xx). My goal here is not to disengage or even to argue against Howard’s thesis but rather to make explicit plagiarism’s relationship to authorship and connect it to issues of property that pressure preconceptions about how language works.

I rely heavily on Howard’s scholarship throughout the dissertation. At the same time it is crucial to note what a valuable part her initial monograph plays in orienting the questions and lines of inquiry I’ve chosen to pursue in this study. I’ve resisted a social science approach purposefully because I would argue the gestalt Howard introduced, and which much of the successive scholarship has trusted, should be reviewed again in
light of writing technologies that make the affect around plagiarism more explicit and more readily available to confront and to examine.

The Argument #3: The New Vulgarities – Scribe, Printer, Author, Writer, Blogger, ReCreator

In the context of writing, property can be linked to the evolution of print most certainly, but I would like to suggest that it can and must also be connected to pedagogy, to the conversations about access to and delivery of knowledge. The shift from manuscript to print culture has been documented by many scholars. But our story begins further back, with those conversations about orality and literacy. Orality, literacy, print, mass print, and now digital production are all textual technologies that frame how language practitioners conceive of the origins of language. Where and how we experience language can determine values placed on language.

In Preface to Plato Eric Havelock examines the philosopher’s attack on poetry and offers two key observations that benefit this dissertation and allow us to move from the idea of plagiarism as either simple procedural error or grievous authorial sin into a more complex conversation about how plagiarism represents a kind of new vernacular, a new vulgarity, that challenges seemingly prescribed concepts of writing. Havelock notes that Plato dismisses the “champions of poetry” as “representatives of common opinion” (8). The “common” modifier here is crucial for it sets forth a theme we will confront again and again as new production technologies emerge and older technologies (orality, scribal culture, print, mass production) become precious metonymies, or even vehicles of nostalgia that act as preservative symbols against progressive, often apocalyptic futures. Additionally, such impetus to preservation can
create existential crises out of what would appear to be mundane, even trivial, inventions.

A typewriter, for example, makes a process more efficient, but if a culture values the pen as a creative instrument, then the typewriter heralds a catastrophic event. And as we reflect on textual technologies in particular, we can see that the forward motion has been toward efficiency, mass production, and speed because such aspects and features open access to knowledge for more populations. Textual technologies are democratizing, a concept we will encounter when we discuss Lanham’s *Electronic Word*.

The common or the popular threatens the reified tradition, which, as in Plato, offers the opportunity to present sophisticated or cultured views as redemptive. This existentializing urge can also translate the common into the profane and the traditional into the sacred without much notice by those within the systems. Further, such breakdowns reinforce the authority of those in educated positions or positions as educators, making them into deliverers of knowledge and the gatekeepers of the knowledge base. That power translates, again, into an existential value that may be mistaken as missionary.

Havelock unravels Plato’s tenth book of the *Republic* in order to shed light on this preservation instinct and what Havelock intuits, but never quite articulates, is Plato’s anxiety about how the popular or common or vulgar or vernacular appropriations of texts pressure the traditional authority from which Plato receives his preeminence.

The two dichotomies of common versus sophisticated and average versus rare, work well as an extension of the property frame. In many cultures, such as that ancient
Greek city state Athens, the common space was established by authority and more importantly, by trade. The agora, for example, functioned as the central marketplace and free space for all classes to interact. Such boundaries change throughout time, when we get to medieval and Renaissance Europe, when the Catholic Church and the royal houses set up boundaries, and as we move further into that future, which is our history, we will see and have seen grid systems and national lines become the marks by which land is divided; and in so many fundamental ways, the technologies of texts mirror and perhaps even inform how such authorities draw those lines.

Havelock’s study informs Ong’s *Orality and Literacy*, the main thesis of which focuses on the enhancement writing provides to oral cultures but also on the distinct ways in which thinking and thought become representable in each production model. Writing, as Ong argues, is a technology that can both augment but also detract from the previous technology, that of orality. Oral cultures, as he states, do not comprehend signs in the same way that literate cultures do. Written systems make stable names and labels whereas oral cultures understand such things as transient and ephemeral. Further, as Ong examines the techniques that broaden the gap between orality and literacy, which include seemingly commonplace issues such as typography and indexing but at one point he notes that:

Print created a new sense of the private ownership of words. Persons in a primary oral culture can entertain some sense of proprietary rights to a poem, but such a sense is rare and ordinarily enfeebled by the common share of lore, formulas, and themes on which everyone draws. With writing, resentment at plagiarism begins to develop. The ancient Latin poet Martial (i. 53. 9) uses the
word plagiarius, a torturer, plunderer, oppressor, for someone who appropriates another’s writing. But there is no special Latin word with the exclusive meaning of plagiarist or plagiarism. The oral commonplace tradition was still strong. In the very early days of print, however, a royal decree or privilegium was often secured forbidding the reprinting of a printed book by others than the original publisher.

(128)

Connecting privilege to plagiarism, Ong establishes the groundwork for his point about enclosure and commonality. Such an observation is the bedrock concept in this dissertation, for it brings us back to the idea of property. Once texts are able to be enclosed and textual producers given privilege, the commons is created. Boundaries that enclose simultaneously disclose; furthermore such enclosures in print make the thought behind print texts appear static, stable, and real. They reify.

Ong uses the work of Havelock and Eisenstein, whom we will discuss shortly, to formulate his thesis about intertextuality and the eventual weight that being able to “fix” text plays in literate cultures. What he, Havelock, and Eisenstein neglect to fine tune is the educational model that acts in many ways to preserve the exchange of ideas as sacred; rather they choose to instead focus on other theoretical models – economic, social, mechanical. Even in his work on Ramus, Ong tends to take an educational model, such as agonism, for granted and from that assumption draws conclusions. Whereas in Havelock’s work, for instance, the critique of Plato’s Republic hinges on the defense of poetry as a way in which knowledge is delivered. Plato, on the other hand, comes from a point of view of orality, or more importantly, a privileged system of education that prized discourse as performance over performance as performance.
Poetry stands in for the emerging culture of writing that threatens institutionalized education.

The anxiety about writing is a continued trope in Plato, as Derrida points out in “Plato’s Pharmacy.” Writing acts as the “joker” in the *Phaedrus*. Socrates uses the myth of Thoth and Thamas to critique writing; Derrida scrutinizes the dialogue and focuses on the indeterminacy that lurks behind the text and how in some ways the power to double, as Thoth can do in his position of god of invention, reveals his existence, which is absence. The joker persona, or more appropriately the trickster persona, of Thoth explicates how writing, all language representation essentially, works to erase itself (435). Language as a fixed or static system collapses as Derrida examines the dialogue and points out the deeply embedded irony of the Thoth and Thamas interchange.

Many of these works strive to disclose a revelation about language: it is a technology of catastrophe, in part. Language produces cataclysmic ruptures, inserting the space between the pronouns and ironically “creating” the need for nominalization. The structure of language, then, is neither pharmaceutical nor technological but rather is represented by the image of the ouroborus, the snake eating its own tail, or perhaps more appropriately, the subductive plate that shifts infrequently but catastrophically and moves the ground under our feet.

If language is a technology then its subsequent operating systems (orality, literacy, print, mass print, digital) modify the experience of the linguistic rupture in an effort to stabilize and that stabilization, as it matures, becomes institutionalized until another system, another mini catastrophe or seismic event per se, divulges the identity
of the language fault. As we see in Plato, the protectors of the oral tradition such as Socrates (the voice of Plato really) recognize the impending dangers of literacy, which can be attributed to an anxiety about authenticity. As Ong notes: “Witnesses were prima facie more credible than texts because they could be challenged and made to defend their statements, whereas texts could not (this, it will be recalled, was exactly one of Plato’s objections to writing)” (94).

The ability to defend and answer charges, to be an agent, is taken away in writing but then reestablished by what Ong describes as the privilegum. Privilege and property take the place, I would argue, for an authenticating mechanism. Plagiarism, then, pressures the system of authentication that has been gradually instituted through manuscript and into print culture in the form of citation systems, which succeeded in stabilizing marginalia and made real a way of defending texts in absentia. Citations, concept genealogies, and other forms of capturing and enclosing annotations act in the stead of living voices and such mechanisms are put in place to certify the document to which these marginalia are attached.

Interestingly, as these technologies change, as they render previous technologies obsolete, as they introduce new possibilities and make previous habits anachronistic or even useless, they evolve toward individuation through literacy and print, explaining in part how privilegum comes into being. The privileging of a document or text as one’s own makes it stable and individual and thus subject to scrutiny and certification. Yet as digital technologies have rapidly emerged as composition and writing instruments and geographies, the evolution has moved back toward collectivism, towards the common archive that oral culture both possessed and dispossessed. We
return to the issue of commonality once again and here I would argue that commonality can be viewed as the underlying plate which language ruptured or more specifically, the commons is the code behind writing’s technology.

Plagiarism is the glitch not in the technology of language, since imitation and mimicry are essential to learning language, but rather in the subsequent technology of authentication. Writing as technology or technē is not entirely unique, but the frame of technology again supports this dissertation’s argument, which focuses on how the digital is in some instances, the new vernacular or the new vulgarity.

I use vulgarity as a frame to understand plagiarism because the practice emerges as an often grotesque textual composition at the same time it seems almost commonplace in contemporary conversations about the traditional rules and procedures of writing. Plagiarism acts as a placeholder for several practices that can be summed up as what not to do.

**What Lies Beneath**

This dissertation argues that to study plagiarism is to study how texts are made and how those texts can be unmade. Plagiarism unmakes authority, unmakes citation, unmakes the ontological markers that attribute words to an author. And it is that ability to unmake which drives this examination.

Additionally, accusations of plagiarism support the print system of authorship, at least in its traditional form, or tradition as print has constructed authorship. The printing press, as Eisenstein notes, brought about an epistemological change about the ways in which textual artifacts were composed, produced, and yes, attributed, “Bibliography, no less than zoology became collaborative and subject to incremental change” (86). Eisenstein’s seminal study of the Early Modern European printing culture highlights
historically what is happening contemporarily. What Eisenstein notes as occurring over a gradual time period – the replacement of manuscript culture with print – we are now experiencing in a concentrated time frame. The personal computer, for example, was invented in the early 1970s. The smartphone has been on the market for less than a decade. In 1996 only 14% of Americans used the internet compared to 87% in 2014 (http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/internet-use/internet-use-over-time/). The speed with which we are experiencing the catastrophic shift in communication, writing, and textual play, I argue, increases the amount of affect and anxiety, especially around the status of the individual consciousness as authorial agent, an affect and anxiety that has been hovering under our cultural skins since the advent of photography, cinematic, and televisual media.

This dissertation moves through and towards this argument in its chapters. The chapters comprise scholarship, theory, research, and yes, speculation. We recite the tale of plagiarism every day. When I say “we,” I include in this grouping teachers, scholars, writers, and to a degree, readers – those of us who work with text must also always be aware of the limitations, the boundaries such work imposes on its laborers. In the second chapter I will review the large body of plagiarism scholarship and consider that scholarship as two distinct waves. The literature review sets up how this dissertation fits into the larger scholarly conversation but also to position the dissertation as an address or response to that scholarship.

The third chapter is titled “Barbarians v. Gatekeepers: Digital Nativity, Open Access, and Disintegrating Property Lines.” It examines how digital technology, especially Prensky’s digital native model, frame institutional understanding about textual
habits, practices, and yes beliefs among the young, especially those who have grown up immersed in the digital landscape.

The fourth chapter, “A Dissolving Contract: Writing Program Administration, Print Authority, and Plagiarism,” extends the argument from “Barbarians v. Gatekeepers” by focusing on and locating one set of institutional paradigms in writing studies. The Council of Writing Program Administrators and the NCTE are seats of disciplinary authority and much of that authority rests on print-based prejudices about writing. I charge the WPA, in particular, to reconceptualize its current stance on plagiarism in light of the rapidly changing tools of writing, including social media.

The fifth chapter, “The Automotive Trickster: Plagiarism and the Apocalypse of Authority,” plays on Howard’s work in Standing in the Shadow of Giants but instead of reviewing metaphors we have used to define plagiarism, this chapter offers a shift in metaphor. The trickster figure, who is often the figure in folklore and myth that exposes the accepted boundaries of the culture, is an appropriate reconfiguration of the plagiarist. This chapter pays close attention to the agency of plagiarism, the plagiarist, and argues that the plagiarist in the new literacy actually exposes those prejudices that we have discussed in previous chapters. This chapter provides the punctuation point to the dissertation.

In the concluding chapter I review avenues of study that branch from this initial research agenda, including the issue of copiability and celebrity, which is a particular interest. I also introduce fandom and celebrity studies as another way of reconsidering what it means to own and cite texts. Fandom offers a unique view on textual play and often butts up against those definitions of plagiarism that we have become so attached
In the end, I want this dissertation to make one thing clear: Plagiarism marks a boundary: it determines what is and what is not property; it distinguishes between illicit and licit textual behaviors. Plagiarism also blurs the lines – because textual production (or writing) comes in many shapes within many disciplines and environments.

To plagiarize is to not rewrite but to overwrite – the opposite of the citational practice of underwriting.

The questions at the heart of this study are what do we know about plagiarism, what do we say about plagiarism, and what can we do about plagiarism? Such questions challenge prescribed notions of what it means to create a text; in fact, these questions pressure the ideas of composition that have been conflated with invention. The bridge terms that sustain such confusions are integrity, originality, and authenticity. These terms are deeply intertwined in contemporary commentary on writing – to write is to be original, to be authentic, to have integrity. Every time an act of plagiarism is defined as such an act of authorship is invoked. The plagiarist is the ghost of the author and vice versa.
CHAPTER 2
PROBLEMS, PARADOXES, AND PLAGIARISM: A LITERATURE REVIEW

The sign and credentials of the poet are, that he announces that which no man foretold.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Poet*

Introduction

The majority of this chapter will focus on contemporary plagiarism studies as the object of study. A consideration of and reflection on the various emotional responses to plagiarism is the dissertation’s primary objective; it motivates the call to action, which is a return to theoretical conversations about plagiarism. Positioning plagiarism studies as the object of examination enables the dissertation to emphasize three key features to the affect surrounding plagiarism.

First, to study plagiarism as an act and a concept involves a complex, transient, and rhizomatic series of questions, assumptions, and ideas about writing, the writer, and text that are far too large to condense into one document, especially one that’s purpose is to demonstrate moving from amateur to expert. The limits of the dissertation restrict the possible conversations and in this way, I have selected threads of scholarship to highlight and discuss rather than try to encompass the long history of plagiarism.

Second, part of the dissertation’s thesis focuses on the historicizing of plagiarism as object of study in reaction to external and internal disciplinary and cultural forces, specifically those that pressure criticism to make materialistic and social science moves that gather data but also tend to diminish other approaches that may not have readily available pragmatic ends. Such studies often get couched in an entitlement and dilitante rhetoric and as a result, move conversants away from the deep philosophical and
theoretical questions to more pragmatic and for the literary and writing disciplines, often a pedagogical inquiry.

Finally, the dissertation challenges the methodologies of these studies as categories of inquiry that restrict themselves to pedagogy in a way that reinforces the authority/authorship paradigm and thus continues the struggle over what plagiarism does and does not entail. The chapter considers the definition of plagiarism as ground zero point and from there, the contemporary studies move toward division and categorization, specifically around three topic areas: pedagogy, disciplinary, and language acquisition/pedagogy for multilingual learners. This impetus for division marks the field’s (plagiarism studies) move to legitimization by creating disciplinary boundaries that are informed by previous mechanisms of authority, which subsequent chapters will catalog and challenge.

To begin let us consider the paradoxical problem of plagiarism and authorship.

**The Three Ps: Problem, Paradox, Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a paradoxical problem of game theory; it’s the revelation of an exchange that is never an exchange; it’s an economic efficiency and deficiency. One cannot move through plagiarism without encountering a debt/credit system. The historical ratification of citation is based on the economy of exchange and so the plagiarist acts as a parasitic textual presence, but ever present and invisible. In his text *The Parasite* Michel Serres notes that “history has its economy where exchange is fundamental” (30). Serres turns the parasite into a parable about language; in this way, I would bring his text to bear heavily on what and how we understand the operation of plagiarism. The parasite, much like a paratext, adheres to the body, feeding off it but at the same time becoming part of the system of the organism’s life. Plagiarism cannot
exist without the concept of authorship and conversely, authorship cannot exist without plagiarism. The parasite, for Serres, is an occasion of paradox. To have an organism that both bleeds out and gives life to the host body. The host, which acts as an appropriate analogy here, is the seemingly original body or the original text in this case.

Plagiarism reveals the debt and credit economy of textual practice. To plagiarize something at once relies on a credit and erases a debt. A paradox occurs when two contradictory events seemingly happen simultaneously; paradoxes have been used as a trope in genre fiction and media that seem especially either distrustful or all too trusting of science. I call plagiarism a paradox because it discloses an offense and defense. And for all of our anxiety about plagiarism, sometimes it can be the punchline to a joke such as when we chuckle over misquoted lyrics to a song.

That problem, however, can emerge within a number of different contexts such as pedagogical, cultural, and even economic. To study plagiarism, then, is to choose how to approach the “problem” and to a large degree, this dissertation challenges the rhetorical notion of problematizing plagiarism and instead attempts to view it as a situation, one that occurs as part of textual production and one that has been historically problematized based on how Western culture views writing. So this dissertation uses plagiarism to critique conceptual knowledge about writing and then asks a basic question: Is plagiarism a problem?

Entering the study of plagiarism and situating oneself as part of the conversation presents a range of problems. Through which corridor does one access the problem? There is no primary text so one always has to enter the conversation through other conversations. The scholarship of plagiarism is a scholarship in relief, much like the
stone façade of the Parthenon. Of course, one might argue that the structure of the scholarship of plagiarism acts as a metonymy for writing studies scholarship in general. How? Unlike other fields, even sister fields such as literary theory or criticism, there is often a primary text around which one builds study. In plagiarism studies, the primary text is the definition.

**Defining Plagiarism**

To plagiarize, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, can either be a transitive or intransitive act. In its transitive conjugation, it means to “steal or pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own” or “to use another’s production without crediting the source.” In its intransitive form, to plagiarize means to “commit literary theft” or “present as new or original an idea or product derived from an existing source.” The OED defines the verb, “to plagiarize,” in the following manner: “Originally of writers, later also of composers, artists, etc.: to take and use as one’s own (the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another person); to copy (literary work or ideas) improperly or without acknowledgement; (occas.) to pass off as one’s own the thoughts or work of (another).” In a cursory reading the two versions appear to be straightforward: plagiarism is stealing. It is the usurpation of work without due acknowledgement.

Immediately complicating this view, however, is an aspect of the plagiarist’s presumption that is not typically associated with other acts of theft: plagiarism is an act of hubris. The hubris appears in the “taking” and “using” of another’s property, which can represent a host of other sins from envy and jealousy to covetous greed and fraud. As has been noted in the exhaustive research of plagiarism, even the term’s etymological roots bear strange fruit. The assumption of theft is buried deep in the word, in its etymology of plage-, which shares a decedent in the term “to kidnap.” Plagiarism
(or plagiary) acts out malice—perhaps intentional, perhaps unavowed—toward the author of the plagiarized text. In its etymology, plagiarism is an affectively charged, specifically malicious, commandeering of another’s ideas or words and a subsequent presentation of them as one’s own creation. And plagiarism has worked well as a stage name for unrecognized intertextualities, opening up an avenue of pedagogical discourse that centers on what causes plagiarism and how cultural institutions, such as the university, can best prepare for and handle its incidence.

Concern over plagiarism has inspired a flurry of scholarly and popular treatments of the subject. For this reason, a reader can find just as many lawyers writing about plagiarism as one can find writing studies scholars, in addition to a plethora of “popular” renditions covering topics from copyright infringement to authorship integrity. The quantity of discourse on plagiarism, however, belies the claim that it has a clear cut, apparent, indeed transparent, definition.

The devotion of so much textual space to exploring a settled issue is, in fact, a symptom of an unacknowledged tension—a rhetorical tension in the discourse and a psychological tension in the attitudes of those preoccupied with plagiarism. The pragmatic approach to plagiarism constitutes a defense against this double tension. That defense comes out in the emphasis on detection of, prevention of, and aversion to plagiarism and any action that may be perceived as plagiarism.

Defining plagiarism is a strategic activity for teachers of writing in any discipline. However, as has been indicated, this activity is not straightforward, since it involves a complex process of not only identifying the limits of plagiarism but also instilling a moral attitude toward plagiarism. Thus the etymology of plagiarism is instructive: the plagiarist,
literally kidnaps another person’s idea or text. The repercussions for pedagogy are clear; the pedagogue is at one instance a bounty hunter and a rescuer.

I have no doubt that plagiarism is a crisis, but I question what type of crisis. The field of writing studies, for the most part, has confined plagiarism to a pragmatic pedagogical problem, one that can be and ought to be vigorously and directly addressed (and all the more so if university teaching is not to succumb to various unstated but nevertheless disingenuous and omnipresent political pressures to look the other way – for example, so as to increase retention rates). Much of the theoretical discourse of plagiarism returns to the classroom, as if to present the student/author as a means to understand the presence of plagiarism and its disruptive and ominous effects. These discussions almost always attempt to translate literary and cultural criticisms into practice. Far from addressing the issues, however, these studies reinforce the arbitrary boundaries that have confined the discipline itself to a masquerade of theoretical relevance – that is composition theorists transform questions about authorship into theories of empowering the student/author or a postmodern critique of identity into an opportunity for collaborative learning theories. When it comes to plagiarism, writing studies pilfers and plagiarizes literary theory, cutting and pasting chunks of analyses into a pastiche of pedagogical practice. In other words, pedagogical discussions are always plagiaristic, always redundant, and always presenting themselves as original when they are simply derivative. Pedagogy is not progress.

Plagiarism is an apocalypse of sorts for pedagogy. It signals a shift in how we, in the form of Western culture and its indoctrinating institutions, view intellectual property and intellectual production, but even more so how convergent economic, cultural, and
intellectual interests become when faced with plagiarism. The deepening divisions over what plagiarism is and what it is not is augmented by an increasingly digitized environment where knowledge is a shared commodity that may not have a price (Lessig 2004). The debate over plagiarism intensifies with digital writing and marks the divide between composition and cultural studies. Digital writing is regressive and redundant, but at the same time, it is unique.

Plagiarism mimics the politics of representation that digital writing encourages and disseminates by making information attainable in ways and by means that have not been so until the last few decades. Digital writing identifies an issue which composition studies has not fully attended to because it is not equipped to handle the discussion – pedagogy is intellectual clerisy and the pedagogue, specifically the teacher of writing, is a priest. The angst surrounding plagiarism hinders the possibility of this revelation; plagiarism marks the limit of the old pedagogue in a new literacy. Thus, treatments of plagiarism as a theory in composition, as a theory of composition, emphasize the problem with not only defining plagiarism as a problem but also with defining “composition.” As teachers of writing, among others, try to define plagiarism, the emotive responses reveal how the notion of studying composition (composition studies) cannot and will not define itself. Plagiarism is a crisis of definition because it has to be, just as composition studies must suffer a crisis of identity—to still exist. As JB Yeats stated, “Personality is born of pain.”

A Short Non-History

As stated in the introduction, this dissertation examines Rebecca Moore Howard’s *Standing in the Shadow of Giants* as a primary source for plagiarism studies; however, discussions and scholarship existed long before Howard’s text, even in her
own scholarship. As such, this dissertation cannot ever fully articulate all of the conversations involving plagiarism. What it can do is select, prioritize, and categorize the colloquy and present something akin to a colloquim of resources. To this end, the dissertation identifies the scholarship as having three waves: **pre-patchwriting**, **patchwriting**, and **post-patchwriting**. Patchwriting, Howard’s invented term for a textual practice that hides plagiarism from itself, provides a structure around which discussion can be built.

In the pre-patchwriting wave, most scholarship or discussion was diasporic. How so? The long history of plagiarism can hardly be summed up in a chapter or even a dissertation but for the purposes of this study we’ll address three major categories. The first category involves authorship studies; the second category involves intellectual property studies; and the third category involves pedagogy.

The conversations often arose from contingent conversations about authorship, authenticity, originality, invention, and a range of other terms that were used to examine the craft of writing through a particularly artistically driven presumption or as tangent to the issue of ownership, especially over popular properties. Howells contemplates the phenomena of plagiarism by pondering how such a sin (as he describes it) which is most certainly to be exposed still hold allure for the plagiarist (“The Psychology of Plagiarism”).

The anxiety about plagiarism is well founded through several historical texts because it cannot unhook itself from concerns about originality, authenticity, authorship, and other tangent conversations about the artist and genius. Here Emerson’s quote becomes especially potent. The poet, or any writer in this case, is endowed with a
historically important role – that of truth teller. Of course, this notion of the poet as
diviner stands in ironic contrast to Plato’s warning about the poet’s role as intellectual
grim reaper. But for Emerson, who represents a particular ethos, the poet is the maker
of words and the creator of art. And he emerges from a cultural tradition, mostly
informed by the romantics, that prizes the

T.S. Eliot articulates the tension well with “No poet, no artist of any art, has his
complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his
relation to the dead poets and artists” (37). The writing art, in particular, seems most
preoccupied with the presence of the dead author and how best to honor that author
while still establishing a separate identity. One could posit that plagiarism displaces a
certain separation anxiety. In other arts the act of plagiarism is reframed through moves
such as assemblage, collage, and pastiche.

It is no wonder then that postmodern scholars such as Hutcheon, Derrida,
Jameson, Debord, and others who study the dramatic change that media and
photography brought to text and writing would use pastiche and its later more culturally
consumable term, remix, as ways of understanding textual production.

Not surprisingly, much of the discourse surrounding plagiarism is moralistic. And
whenever morality is at issue, the circumstance dictates that plagiarism is no longer
definable in terms of external or public standards but in terms of an internalized
standard of reference. In this case, plagiarism is something like pornography; one
knows it when one sees it, an attitude fraught with difficulty. St. Onge discusses some of
these difficulties in his 1986 study The Melancholy Anatomy of Plagiarism. Although St.
Onge’s study is dated, his attention to the multi-faceted demands of plagiarism signals
the approaches of later studies such as Burnanen, et. al (1999) and Howard (1999). For St. Onge language acquisition, scholarly enterprise, and legal definitions play a part in how Western Culture perceives plagiarism, and he points out in a sardonic tone that “the intellectual world has purloined the entire vocabulary of theft to characterize literary stealing, which is the ultimate in intellectual laziness.” The perception that pedagogical definitions lack is not unusual; however his accusation of “laziness” brings into view part of the affective component of plagiarism. If intellectuals have “purloined” a vocabulary, then they have committed the act against which they rail, and the accusation further hints at an intellectual indolence, an indolence that repeats itself in the accusations against the plagiarist. Plagiarism is not a simple matter of stealing or laziness, however, and many scholars, especially composition study specialists, acknowledge the problems of defining plagiarism in generalized terms.

The Accusative Case

The accusation of plagiarism starts with a variety of suppositions about ownership, authorship, and property rights that are not fully detailed in its definition(s). Burnanen, Lunsford, and Roy (1999), Howard (1999), and Randall (2001) demonstrate the various ways in which plagiarism suffers definitional deficiencies, i.e. the definition depends on situations and contexts that work against a generalized view of plagiarism. For example, plagiarism in a classroom can be dependent on assignment construction, collaborative or non-collaborative workspaces, and other factors that may, in fact, encourage or authorize what could be construed as “plagiaristic” activities. Additionally, the volatility of plagiarism is performed, in part, by the metaphors used to analogize it: theft, fraud, misconduct, piracy, cheating, transgression, and even more sinister connotations abound. In science, plagiarism is a procedural error, a misconduct of
resources. In law, plagiarism can be the gateway to fraud. In literature, to plagiarize is to steal. And in culture at large, plagiarism is often portrayed as an act of transgression. The United States Department of Health and Human Services’s Office of Research Integrity offers an extensive guide on plagiarism, which includes sections on “ethical writing,” “plagiarism,” “self-plagiarism,” and “lesser crimes of writing.” The introduction to this manual argues:

Curiously, when it comes to the topic of plagiarism, many professional writing guides appear to assume that the user is already familiar with the concept. In fact, while instruction on attribution, a key concept in avoiding plagiarism, is almost always provided, some of the most widely used writing guides do not appear to offer specific sections on plagiarism. Moreover, those that provide coverage often fail to go beyond the most basic generalities about this type of transgression. (my emphasis)

This observation is excerpted from a larger set of cultural assumptions that categorize plagiarism as a pertinent subject that has not been given full attention by authorities on the matter, namely experts in writing. The guide’s writer, Miguel Roig, charges other guides with not being specific enough in the description and definition of plagiarism, reinforcing a judgment has been addressed, in part, by compositionists: if plagiarism can be detailed enough, qualified enough, then it may just be possible to define, but as noted earlier, the number of inquiries far exceeds the options for clarifying the definition. Much of the current research on plagiarism has turned to the specific locations and purposes of writing, whether in the disciplines or in the professions, to examine and propose rules of plagiarism that apply to those settings, which will be examined later in this review. The calls for a generalized definition of plagiarism,
however, are not abating and part of the confusion between specific plagiaristic events and plagiarism as a common standard materializes in the analogies of plagiarism to theft and other crimes of productive larceny.

Metaphors of production, whether cultural, natural, or otherwise, are already disconnected from their actions, making the project of defining plagiarism all the more difficult. For example popular music such as hip-hop and rap depend on sampling, so when an artist “borrows” music from another artist to create a new product, who should take credit for the “new” work of art? Sampling is not new either. Hoesteroy (2001) studied the technique of pastiche in the visual arts, cinema, literature, and pop art and in the glossary to his work observed that plagiarism “corresponds to the pastiche of the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, which copied original work with deceptive intent.” So the metaphor of theft contests some artistic notions of creativity, notions that rely on pastiche, montage, and excerpting as technical modes of production. Intellectual theft has been applied to music file sharing and sampling, influences in novel writing (Dan Brown, JK Rowling, Stephanie Meyer, to name a few), and in 2004 then US Attorney General John Ashcroft spearheaded a campaign that would enforce intellectual property laws, “These recommendations are a blueprint for the most aggressive, the most ambitious and the most far-reaching law enforcement effort ever undertaken to protect intellectual property and counter intellectual theft." In the same article by Hiestand, the columnist notes “Ashcroft even suggested that the high profit margin of copyright theft could become a source of terrorist funding as more traditional avenues of fund raising are cut off.” What is clear from Ashcroft’s comments and Hiestand’s observations juxtapose intellectual theft, of which plagiarism is a part, with a range of
nefarious and dangerous activities. The potential, betrayed with the word “could,” dictates the moralistic discourse about plagiarism. The fear is not about what plagiarism does, but what it could do.

Howard (2005) takes John Lesko to task for a similar analogy where he equates Ward Churchill’s plagiarism with textual vampirism. Lesko, the editor of plagiary.org, is a staunch critic of postmodernism and what he views as the wholesale bargaining and foreclosure of authorship by poststructuralist theories that question the notion of the author. Among his favorite targets are Foucault and Barthes whose ideas, not surprisingly, saturate the conversations about plagiarism. Theft, however, limits the discussion of plagiarism by couching it as a violation of personal property, since many might argue that the intellect is another form of individuality, but as Posner (2007) argues “The definition (theft) is also inaccurate; we’ll see that there can be plagiarism without theft. And it is imprecise, because it is unclear what should count as ‘theft’ when one is not taking anything away from someone but simply making a copy.” Posner, along with others, acknowledges the slippery slope of defining plagiarism; it’s a term that stands in for something else; it is an accusation far more potent than theft. One website, www.famousplagiarists.org, pronounces “A Plagiarist is a murderer! The murderer of the Author! For his own survival’s sake, he must cover up the fact of this murder, for once discovered his own doom is sure. Like an Author—but not really—the Plagiarist seeks to attain the immortality that accompanies authorship, yet instead of ever reaching a position of author-ity.” While overly wrought in tone, the description of the plagiarist as murderer is powerful; it scripts the action (plagiarism) as a threat to the body, not just the work. In this case, the plagiarist commits two crimes: murder and
subterfuge. Even more startling is the assertion of author as immortal, which presents a cultural supposition that equates fame with perpetuity. Interestingly enough, the website also describes the plagiarist as a “textual vampire.” The plagiarist, then, sucks the life from and murders the author for the sake of eternal recognition. It marks the confusion between action and actor, whereby an intention is ascribed to an agent and then the agent is condemned for the assumed intention.

Plagiarism, in many cases, becomes the plagiarist and by “murdering” the author, the plagiarist seals his/her own doom. How? The passage does not explicitly state shame as its underlying penalty, but the language refers to and relies on the assumption of shame turned to guilt. Someone will know; someone will recognize the plagiarist. The charge contextualizes the stakes involved in the battle between plagiarism versus authorship, a battle that finds itself played out not only in the popular arena but in the classroom as well. On the pedagogical front, however, one way to alleviate the ambiguity is to turn to professional codes of conduct that act as guideposts for these definitions.

The plagiarist as thief illustrates the non-productive, even counter-productive, threat posed by plagiarism. A thief steals for a number of reasons, but the intention is never as important as the act. Randall (2007) argues, “Metaphors of cultural reproduction dating back to Latin times insist on the transformative work required to elevate a product from servile to aesthetic imitation; debates about plagiarism from these times forward depend directly on conflicting claims with respect to what contemporary copyright law terms ‘significant enhancement.’” The thief does not produce nor does the plagiarist augment. Randall’s historical lens on plagiarism
coincides with others, including Howard and Posner, who tie contemporary conceptions of plagiarism to an evolution of and collusion between economic, political, and legal concerns over intellectual property rights.

A class of definition that contributes to setting parameters of ownership is copyright. Copyright encompasses an entire class of laws that determine the rights, privileges, and responsibilities involved in textual production. Goldstein (2004) and Strangelove (2005) position current characterizations of copyright against the emergence of digital media outlets. Both argue that, to a great extent, the digital threatens the already controversial conceptions of copyright and both studies are cultural critiques. Goldstein compares the historical differences between US and European systems of copyright and how those differences greatly inform the types of laws in place now, while Strangelove couches his critique in a Marxist treatment of “digital piracy” that closely resembles Marilyn Randall’s ideas about “guerilla plagiarism.” The theoretical discussions of copyright are ripe and heated, but there are points of disengagement with studies of plagiarism. Notably, plagiarism carries no legal definition. It is not a civil or criminal charge. Plagiarism is purely cultural when it comes to the law.

How ironic then, when St. Onge accuses intellectuals of “purloining” the vocabulary of theft, that he identifies how the issue of plagiarism becomes confused with sanctioned definitions, i.e. legal, material, and actionable limits that can be enforced and penalized. The language used to describe plagiarism is as unoriginal as plagiarism appears to be, which can explain the desire to connect plagiarism to something more tangible, such as copyright. The interest in copyright, however,
highlights the intersections of cultural apparati that concern themselves with maintaining borderlines between accepted and non-accepted practices of authorship, thus exacerbating the efforts to universalize a definition or an approach. Jaszi (1991) challenges the legal interest in copyright infringement, “Legal scholars’ failure to theorize copyright relates to their tendency to mythologize ‘authorship,’ leading them to fail (or refuse) to recognize the foundational concept for what it is – a culturally, politically, economically, and socially constructed category rather than a real or natural one.” Jaszi’s observations return us to the issue of analogizing plagiarism. The mythologizing and naturalizing of authorship lends more force to the accusation of plagiarism; how could a naturalized, mythologized author be a victim of theft, or even, murder?

Across Disciplines

One way to alleviate the frustration over defining and thus identifying plagiarism is by measuring plagiaristic activities against a professional code of conduct. Three disciplines where plagiarism has become a hot-button issue are: the sciences, history and composition studies. Each field has professional organizations that have taken up the call for action with regards to plagiarism, issuing statements that attempt to delineate what characterizes plagiarism and what does not. For the sciences, with their emphases on patenting and trademarking scientific results, the issue of plagiarism relates to three major themes: the politics of authorship, cultural differences in defining plagiarism, and the economic ramifications of scientific misconduct.

For the National Science Foundation, plagiarism falls under scientific misconduct and is monitored and enforced by the inspector general: “OIG also evaluates allegations of research misconduct, such as plagiarism or the falsification or fabrication of data,
involving researchers who request or receive NSF funding.” Linking plagiarism with fabrication or falsification provides another connotation to the act; misappropriation is the equivalent of fictionalizing information, and in a discipline where the integrity of data is paramount, any corruption of source material presents a moment of crisis.

For the sciences, plagiarism is more than a citation issue. It is an issue of fraud, misconduct, and it can have grave economic and litigious consequences. These are consistent metaphors employed to contextualize plagiarism. Any misrepresentation of source material can have more than a literary effect; corruption of source material could be deadly. And plagiarism falls under the purview of scientific misconduct, along with fabrication and falsification. The ethical considerations (as well as the professional ones) have caused the science community to turn its attention to how to properly define and deal with plagiarism, and these discussions have permeated both scholarly and popular discussions in the discipline. In a 2005 editorial in Nature the journal states, “At a meeting devoted to the topic at New York University last month, Alan Price of the Office of Research Integrity (ORI), which primarily handles complaints in biomedicine, reported that in the past 16 years, only 5–12% of its misconduct cases each year involved plagiarism.” However, as in the same year, the “US National Science Foundation, revealed that more than 60% of its misconduct findings concern plagiarism.” The divergent numbers could point to several factors, chief among them the problem of defining plagiarism within a field that produces collaborative work. But it may also point to a cultural issue concerning plagiarism that has appeared time and again in the literature, which is the difference between “western” and “non-western” interpretations and use of citation and documentation models.
As a result, more scholarship has been dedicated to plagiarism in the sciences and how to counteract it, especially given the large population of non-native speakers in the sciences. One such area of cultural disconnect between definitions of plagiarism occurs between western conceptions and Chinese conceptions of attribution. Liu (2005), Wilsdon (2007), Gu and Brooks (2008), and others have examined how Chinese students appear to have difficulty with English-language definitions of plagiarism.

To Westerners, China appears to lack a sophisticated system for protecting intellectual property, which is then seen to be a cause of the apparent proclivity of Chinese students to commit plagiarism. If English-language learners do not agree that plagiarism is the same as the theft of real property (as the etymology of the word plagiarism as “kidnapping” suggests), then societies such as China will inevitably be viewed as a “nation of pirates.”

The cultural diversity and divergences surrounding definitions of plagiarism underscore how ESL concerns intersect with interdisciplinary writing issues and make plagiarism seem even more apparent in the sciences. One case of “rampant” plagiarism occurred in Ohio University’s engineering department where more than 20 theses/dissertations were found to be plagiarized, and much of the conversation about the instances revolved around non-native English writers. Concerns such as this frustrate teachers of writing in the sciences, but more recently, scholars have turned their attention toward plagiarism amongst all science writing.

Multicultural differences in defining plagiarism are not the only ‘source’ issue for the sciences. As Buranen and Stephenson (2009) note, the enormity of research
projects in the sciences require larger numbers of participants, which is complicated by a system where “the social structure of science demands authorship, not only to confer symbolic and remunerative rewards, but also, and equally important, to secure responsibility of researchers.” The sciences, with their focus on collaborative research and writing, tend to focus on the prominence and place of the “first author” and how authors are named in the writing. The issue of plagiarism is complicated by the multiplication of players and interests, but this is not the only discipline having discussions about plagiarism. Nor is it the only discipline that views plagiarism as a weakening of the intellectual “chain of evidence.”

Beyond the sciences, other disciplines have turned their attention toward defining and detecting plagiarism, and chief among them is the field of history. The historical profession performs the anxiety over intellectual honor and vigor that stands in most relief from other disciplines. The AHA’s “Statement on Professional Conduct” defines plagiarism in combat Richard Jenson, when defending Stephen Ambrose, argued that “Scholarship involves a chain of researchers stretching from the original documents, through editors of letterpress editions, to many fellow scholars. Every historian relies on this chain; any deceit or manufacturing of bogus sources is an egregious sin. Ambrose used the chain correctly.” Jon Wiener (2009) The common denominator of “intellectual responsibility” underlines the discourse across the disciplines, but one must question whether or not responsibility stands in for another riskier claim. In some sense, responsibility equals ownership, at least that is the subtextual gesture most distinguished by the various stakeholders. The AHA’s definition of plagiarism, in particular, reveals the highly affective and defensive positions of academics when it
comes to plagiarism. The metaphor of war and battle permeate the document, using terms such as “the frontline of defense against” and finally, “All historians share responsibility for maintenance of the highest standards of intellectual integrity. . . . Scholarship flourishes in an atmosphere of openness and candor, which should include the scrutiny and discussion of academic deception.” Jensen, among others, represents what the AHA’s Statement on Professional Conduct says without saying: plagiarism is another form of attack on a field already under siege.

While the sciences and history have stakes to claim in the plagiarism debate, it is writing studies (or composition studies) that has dealt the most fully with the issue. The Writing Program Administrator's statement defines plagiarism as “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” The language, although clear and direct, reveals the series of caveats that have begun to emerge and are applied to plagiarism. For the WPA plagiarism happens in an instructional location; it is deliberate (with forethought – meaning pre-meditated); and it is the neglect of originality and source material. Howard (1995) argues that “composition studies, like contemporary criticism, presents anything but a unified front on issues of plagiarism and authorship.” And even though this statement was made almost a decade and a half ago, it still applies to how composition studies handles plagiarism and its actor, the plagiarist. However the disparity of responses in composition studies does not detract from the amount or depth of those responses. Instead it emphasizes what has become common practice dialogue – the unpacking and re-packaging of plagiarism as a way of dealing with the uncertain character of the
term. Plagiarism is a serious offense within academic fields, and accordingly many of these areas have attempted to enforce rules of professional conduct that define plagiarism and enforce action against the offender; however, the definitions come under fire when they are enacted in the pedagogical realm. The proclamation that plagiarism is theft works on an abstract level. On a practicable and practical level, though, the charge is not so cut and dry.

Teaching With/For/Against Plagiarism

In writing pedagogy, plagiarism is a hotly debated topic. Writing instructors, both within composition studies and across the disciplines, note the increasing occurrence of plagiarism in student work and in an ironic sense, this observation is presented as “common knowledge” among university personnel. It is not that plagiarism is new, but it is perceived to be more widespread than ever. So it is no wonder that the majority of scholarship about plagiarism takes place as part of pedagogical discourse. There is good reason for this investigation; the writing teacher usually is the first “recognizer” of plagiarism. Within this section I will follow three threads: Cross Curriculum/Cross Culture, Knowledge Economies, and Discourse Communities, the Student-Author Function, and the Rise of Digital.

The most recent literature about plagiarism can be categorized under three interest areas: writing across the curriculum, collaborative writing, and discourse communities. In the last ten years major collections have been published that specifically deal with plagiarism across the disciplines: Howard and Robillard’s *Pluralizing Plagiarism* (2008), Eisner and Vicinus’s *Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: Teaching Writing in the Digital Age* (2008), and Haviland and Mullin’s *Who Owns This Text?: Plagiarism, Authorship, and Disciplinary Concerns* (2009). While not identical,
these studies try to focus on the increasing amount of research being performed outside of composition, and in specific disciplinary fields, that revolve around writing practices, conventions, and deviations.

Each collection begins with a presumed definition of plagiarism: it is problematic. So each collection takes a stance on how best to deal with this problem. For Eisner and Vicinus, contextualizing plagiarism with originality and imitation allows for the assertion that “intellectual property and copyright laws do not give authors, musicians, publishers, agents, or corporations absolute control over all aspects of a work.” For Haviland and Mullin, plagiarism connects to pedagogy across fields of study and how those fields define intellectual property, which for them can contradict approaches to teaching, “We believe that articulating the importance of each discipline’s freedom to borrow, build, and remix ideas that focus on knowledge creation and ownership is much more useful for students than are generic rules and regulations.” And for Howard and Robillard plagiarism presents more than an academic issue; it is a misread of social context. As they state, “The meaning of any textual event, including one potentially classified as plagiarism, is determined not by foundational categories and decontextualized procedures but by people involved in the event, the ways in which they construct their writerly abilities, and the ways in which their writerly identities are constructed by their social situation.” Notice that each statement directly conjures one notion: plagiarism as a restriction. The presumed problem of plagiarism is one of control, and whether it is the restrictive control over a product or over a discipline or even an individual, these collections reflect the portrait of the monster they are trying to banish.
Each study invites scholars from across the curriculum to consider the issue of plagiarism as it pertains a range of disciplinary discourse, from physics research and computer science to art and legal studies. The one common note among these compilations is one of incongruity; different disciplines have disparate concerns about plagiarism. Yet, when further examining the contributors to these collections, only Eisner and Vicinus make an effort to include writers and writing teachers from other fields. Both Howard and Robillard’s and Havilland and Mullin’s collections, while proposing a multi-disciplined approach to plagiarism, restrict their authors to experts in the composition field. However, the significance of viewing plagiarism from outside the “writing” classroom announces the need to do further study on cross-disciplinary perceptions of plagiarism in a more in-depth manner where teachers of writing from other disciplines can exchange ideas with compositionists. But this need also demonstrates the ambiguities inherent in a single definition of plagiarism and how it triggers anxieties about authorship and ownership of texts.

The interest in plagiarism across disciplines is also part of a renewed (or perhaps continuing) awareness of writing across the university in general. WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum), WID (Writing in the Disciplines), and WIP (Writing in the Professions) concentrate on teaching writing not as a generalized set of skills but as part of discourse communities that create “scenes” of writing, which are particular to each discipline. These movements survive and thrive on the concept of intertextuality, and in this context, plagiarism exists but is defined as the misappropriation and misrepresentation of source material.
The pedagogical importance for naming plagiarism in WAC, WID, and WIP hinges on their emphasis on intertextual connections between genres, and while they may focus on the differences between discourse communities, they also demonstrate the ambiguities inherent in “knowledge creation” practices where students must depend on precedent to construct originality. And it is within these ambiguities that plagiarism most assuredly resides.

Concerns over “original research” appear to be growing, coincidentally, during a time of acute economic upheaval and national unemployment figures that have been climbing. The need to address any limitation in the job market has led many scholars to turn their attention towards skills in potential employees (post-graduate), such as in writing and other “basic” areas. We must wonder if part of the growing popularity of disciplinary writing transpires as a result of this economic turn, however, aside from speculation and beyond the individual economic interests of students, there is also concern over monitoring and maintaining the “innovation” process, of which universities play a key role.

The “knowledge economy” forces universities, and to a larger extent departments and their faculty, to deal with a new type of exchange, one built on information distribution. If knowledge is commodity, then academia plays an even greater role in the maintenance and allocation of resources. And the dynamics of this exchange can be best viewed when considering how plagiarism intersects with the economic notions of copyright and patenting. In their extensive study of patenting within the university system, Jaffe, et.al. observe:
Two sources of heterogeneity that occupy a prominent place in the economics of technical change are ‘basicness’ and ‘appropriability.’ Basicness refers to fundamental features of innovations such as originality, closeness to science, breadth, etc. that impinge on the incentives to engage in R&D and on the choice of research projects. Appropriability refers to the ability of inventors to reap the benefits from their innovations. . . .This view underlies a widespread division of labor whereby public institutions such as universities perform most of the basic research, and private firms do the bulk of the development. (my emphasis)

An entire field of literature is dedicated to the politics and economics of copyright and patent, and this interest traverses discussions of plagiarism. In this regard it is important to note that Jaffe, et al. define originality as a basic component of patent rights; this move mimics the pedagogical practice of invention as fundamental to composition. In order for the student (or the innovator) to lay claim to an idea, “basic” qualifications must be met, and so plagiarism, at its heart, is an offense against originality.

The ambiguity of plagiarism then, whether in its definition or in the event being defined, reveals the anxiety and volatility of claiming text (or anything else) as inventive or innovative. Discussions of patent and copyright within the university echo the issue of plagiarism. Infringement is an actionable offense, both in criminal and civil law, while plagiarism is its literary and academic twin. In The Little Book of Plagiarism, Richard Posner describes how the law recognizes plagiarism but does not punish it, “Though there is no legal wrong named ‘plagiarism,’ plagiarism can become the basis of a lawsuit if it infringes copyright or breaks the contract between author and publisher.” In
other words, plagiarism is a catalyst event; an occasion for judicial action but not actionable itself.

Complicating the politics, economics, and legalities of plagiarism is the increasing accessibility of information via the Internet, which frustrates the definitional boundaries of what plagiarism is and what it is not. In a digital environment where information is as easily sought, found, and replicable, how does plagiarism avoid presence? Digital literacy enacts a form of information sharing that was not possible through print; it has also given substantial support to the library and information sciences, and they have created a niche market for universities by coining the term “information literacy.” And part of its mission is to inform and teach students how to find and use source material in a “proper” manner, which should lead to a decrease in the number of plagiarism cases, correct? But at the same moment that information becomes accessible, the public nature of the information reinforces its inviolability.

In their introduction, Eisner and Vicinus note that “On the one hand, we face the exponential increase in readily available information from the Web, and on the other, threats of property-rights litigation and increasingly limited access to this material.” Property-rights and research access trouble the writing classroom and present the double bind inherent in “original research.” Furthermore, the anxiety of authorship and ownership of intellectual property exacerbate the cultural and economic interests that are involved in the creation of texts, a point taken up further in the second half of this literature review.

At this point it is important to note that the paradox of plagiarism is the alignment of universities both with and against corporate interests. Plagiarism weakens credibility
of source material, but at the same time, copyright and patent laws restrict access to
source materials. And with universities more and more turning to patenting as a form of
fundraising, the economics of plagiarism present more than an intellectual or ethical
problem. While the literature of plagiarism extends far back and well into other
disciplines, recent studies have concentrated on not how to explain plagiarism nor
punish plagiarism but rather how to examine the plagiaristic practice and what can be
done to incorporate the useful habits and exculpate the habits perceived to be
detrimental to the learning and writing process, such as with Howard’s “patchwriting”
argument, which has become part and parcel of current dialogue on plagiarism and its
discontents.

The disconnect between generalizable rules of plagiarism also lends credence to
another current conversation in pedagogy: discourse communities. In her contribution to
Howard and Robillard’s collection, Sandra Jamieson observes, “Discipline-specific
conventions and in particular source use are the markers of membership in academic
disciplines.” Such an observation is concurrent with contemporary composition
arguments around discourse communities and how writing studies must compensate for
the sometimes-contradictory procedures and expectations within disciplines and
without, such as in the professional and corporate arenas.

A consistent way of negotiating this “problem” has been for compositionists to re-
name or retrofit plagiarism as a form of authorship. The first step in this process has
been to categorize types of plagiarism. “Patchwriting,” or what we might refer to as cut
and paste plagiarism, is not the same type of plagiarism as paper mill plagiarism (the
wholesale taking or buying of essays either from another student or from a ‘paper mill’),
and according to Howard, this type of plagiarism is an important component of student learning, much in the tradition of the classical sense of imitatio. Other compositionists have picked up on this trend and have begun to divide plagiarism into a number of incarnations, and by using them, have started to offer arguments and explanations for student plagiarism.

Ritter (2005) takes on paper mill plagiarism as an economic revolt against capitalist notions of entrepreneurship, but also as an indicator of neglectful and ignorant student authorship. Thompson (2002) groups cut and paste plagiarism and collusion together, but points to the academy’s culpability in allowing plagiarism to continue without clear and/or concrete definitions or consequences. Purdy (2005) links the onslaught of plagiarism detection software to the abundance of wholesale papers online and furthers his argument by stating that the emotional response to plagiarism is, in part, a result that “rely on ways in which technology makes plagiaristic practices visible.” Campbell (2007) sardonically uses examples from popular culture (George Harrison, The O.C., Kurt Vonnegut) to describe what he calls “hard” and “soft” plagiarism. “Hard Plagiarism” or “HP” is “copying without attribution,” while “Soft Plagiarism” or “SP” is “pilfering another’s ideas.” The vagueness over the types of plagiarism point to the problems of defining plagiarism in general, and this is where the real “problem” of plagiarism exists.

To compensate for the lack of definitions, many composition scholars have proposed ways to identify plagiaristic practices and then either teach to prevent or incorporate those practices into composition assignments. During the review process, a reader can begin to understand the various approaches to composition studies by the
way in which their proponents propose to deal with plagiarism. With her interest in
discourse communities and pedagogy, Howard (1999) introduced the concept of
‘patchwriting,’ which identifies cut and paste plagiarism as a learning process, and
charges teachers of writing to use, instead of punish, this skill of mimicry. A history of
expressivism and a creative writing background allows Bloom (2008) to present what
she calls “plagiarism-proof” assignments in the form of “insider” versus “outsider” writing
where “students write from inside the problem, issue, or literary or historical work at
hand, they operate as engaged participants rather than as alien outsiders whose
understanding comes through what others – sometimes centuries of others – have had
to say on the subject.” Boland and Havilland (2009), with their focus on WAC and WID,
suggest that those in the social sciences (in this case archeology) integrate student
materials and model a “writing up” note process that exemplifies the types of
professional and academic writing students are expected to perform. Across the board,
plagiarism concerns in composition almost always connect to the student/teacher
relationship and how that interpersonal structure is affected by plagiaristic practices,
and one popular way of negotiating this “problem,” as proposed by many, is to enable
the student to become author. Plagiarism hits at fundamental assumptions within the
discipline as well as affecting the basic relationships that compositionists tend to value
most: student/teacher. As Rebecca Moore Howard states, “Because I am both a theorist
and a writing program administrator, I inevitably place these matters in the compelling
terms of everyday practice.” The impulse to connect the discussion of plagiarism to the
classroom is the most prevalent feature of composition’s approach to plagiarism. A
thorough reading of the available texts contrasts the teacher/student relationship, when
plagiarism is involved, to that of criminal/punisher (executioner). Howard (2002) argues that “we risk becoming the enemies rather than the mentors of our students; we are replacing the student-teacher relationship with the criminal-police relationship.”

But as both Lunsford and Miller remind us, the authority of the student-author is always problematic in the composition classroom.

**The Student-Author**

The opportunity for student authority is a keystone debate in plagiarism within the academic setting. For St. Onge, the spirit of plagiary undermines the development of intellect that he traces from language acquisition to ethical considerations of the professional. Relying heavily on Alexander Lindey’s and Peter Shaw’s studies of plagiarism, St. Onge is the first scholar to address plagiarism as both a theoretical and pedagogical problem in the academy and his argument, to some extent, gives rise to contemporary disputes over the plagiarism boundary.

The conversation around the student author breaks off into three distinct areas: assignment creation, digital literacy, and detection of plagiarism. The controversy about “plagiarism detection software” is well past a decade old. In November 1995, a small blurb appeared in Change that touted a new type of computer-based detection service provided by Glatt that claimed to have a 98% effective rate of catching plagiarism. While this was a small pseudo-advertisement embedded in the journal, the more significant point is that this type of promise was herald’s call for the era of computerized plagiarism hunting. A generation of digital Van Helsings was born to hunt and catch the ideological vampire: the plagiarist. And better yet, this chase did not involve going to the library to search through endless aisles and gargantuan tomes. Instead, the internet could provide the technological weaponry to defend against plagiarism. But while the
age of “Turnitin” ushered in a new way of catching the plagiarist, it has not been without its own problems. Seeing this problem of ambiguity as it intersects with computer programming code plagiarism, Yorick Wilks (2004) poses an interesting question: “I sometimes wonder, in the middle of the night, if the excesses of recent continental literary theory can be seen not only as part of the ‘text technology,’ but also in reaction to it, stemming perhaps from a desire to produce text and text theories inscrutable by machines.” Wilks question disturbs the student/author concept in many ways, but most specifically in terms of technology. While technology may have made plagiarism easier to do and easier to catch, it has made it harder to define as well.

Several composition scholars have worked to re-signify plagiarism in the discourse of teaching writing. Most notably among them is Rebecca Moore Howard, whose Standing in the Shadows of Giants, is one of the first texts in the most recent round of examinations about plagiarism. While Howard’s basic concept is too delineate between degrees of plagiarism, her argument presents a new pedagogical tact that is much in line with theories of collaborative writing and learning. Her curiosity about the subject, as she states, emerges from her personal experience with student plagiarism and the subsequent disappointment with her students. But the amount of plagiarism within her personal case study spurs her to investigate the history of and more recent configurations of plagiarism and what she finds is what most who try to do the same find.

Faced with the plagiarist, an instructor must balance the rules and procedures with which he/she has set forth in the class with the often-affective reaction to the plagiarist and his/her text. Throughout this literature review it has become apparent that
one of the inspirations for discussing and examining plagiarism is experiential. The
literature outlines a series of narratized encounters with plagiarism in the form of the
student plagiarist. Howard (1999) begins her text with an anecdote about a class where
an inordinate amount of plagiarism took place. Bain (1999) relates his experience with
collaborative writing and the separation of student knowledge and student skill. Hansen
(2003) details a few famous cases of plagiarism, but connects them to McCabe’s study
on cheating, as well as the prolific literature on plagiarism, to surveys on student
perceptions of plagiarism and how much the students plagiarism those same students
may have committed. And

One of the only scholars to address the emotive reaction to plagiarism is Amy
Robillard, who in her semi-self confessional article “We Won’t Be Fooled Again,”
investigates plagiarism as a constructed and affectively laden exchange that “must be
understood as social rather than individual” and until that acknowledgment is made, “we
will continue to mythologize anger as individual rather than a social issue.” Robillard’s
observations are integral to moving plagiarism into a theoretical realm and even though
her argument is pedagogical in its inception, the affective aspect of plagiarism signals
an avenue of inquiry that is not dependent upon the classroom.

Robillard, Eisner, Howard, and others examine the relationship between student
and teacher and how plagiarism can affect that dynamic. The presence of the affective
charge, whether anger (Robillard) or disappointment (Howard), provides a critically
reflective moment for writing studies. As noted by many scholars, the power of
plagiarism comes not in the event but in the description of the event. Over the last
century, plagiarism has been allotted many metaphors (theft, fraud, etc.), the power of plagiarism is in the

Contingent with this position is the responsibility that the work of the academy supports, as noted by Eisner and Vicinus in their recent collection of essays Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism, “Within the university we rightly have a profound investment in responsible, independent, intellectual work, lest we undermine the very nature of our profession.” To borrow a line from a popular superhero, “With great power comes great responsibility,” and the weight of that burden emerges quite full in body when writing teachers address plagiarism.
And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self Reliance*

The challenge for our education system is to leverage the learning sciences and modern technology to create engaging, relevant, and personalized learning experiences for all learners that mirror students’ daily lives and the reality of their futures. In contrast to traditional classroom instruction, this requires that we put students at the center and empower them to take control of their own learning by providing flexibility on several dimensions.

—National Education Technology Plan 2010, *Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology*

In January 2013 26-year-old Aaron Swartz hanged himself inside his New York City apartment. Swartz’s life ended amid controversy, both cultural and political. The young programmer had been arrested several years before his death for hacking and downloading thousands of articles from the massive JSTOR database archive, an archive that houses academic writing that covers a broad range of social, political, and
economic disciplines. Swartz was well-known as a programmer (developed RSS, for example) and in his early twenties he became enamored with “open access” advocacy.

In the days, weeks, and months following his death, one of his biggest supporters, Lawrence Lessig, openly contested the idea that Swartz was a criminal; instead he couched the young man’s choices as part of information activism, “Even if the facts the government alleges are true, I am not sure they constitute a crime” (http://mediafreedom.org/2011/07/larry-lessig-responds-says-swartzs-alleged-actions-crossed-ethical-line/). Lessig did not defend Swartz but did thoughtfully respond to the imbalance of the government’s reciprocal response to the action. The conversation about the ethics of Swartz’s “crime” is important here because conversations about the access and manipulation of information are as important as the composition and distribution of information. What Swartz’s crime revealed, in Lessig’s estimation, was an undiscriminating and authoritative defense against those who would access information without either permission from or remuneration to, not the authors of the texts, but their distributors, and within the context of hacking a primarily academic outlet, the crime becomes even more problematic because much of that information, while authored by experts, is often supported by public monies, i.e. public universities.

“Open Access” proponents argue that academic research should not reside behind pay walls, that these documents and the accompanying research should be available to everyone, and that this knowledge should be shared with all. Swartz’s story is poignant, of course, and for the short time that it preoccupied the media, it exploited the traditional tropes surrounding the death of someone so young and with so much potential, but his death also drew attention to a particular cultural discussion: it turned a
critical gaze on the issue of what should and what should not be open to public view. Even the report that MIT issued in July 2013 tries to draw lines between governmental authority and its institutional culpability in the Swartz prosecution, stating that

In preserving MIT’s stance of neutrality and limited involvement, MIT decision-makers did not inquire into the details of the charges until a year after the indictment, and did not form an opinion about their merits. MIT took the position that U.S. v. Swartz was simply a lawsuit to which it was not a party, although it did inform the U.S. Attorney’s Office that the prosecution should not be under the impression that MIT wanted jail time for Aaron Swartz. (14)

The careful wording of the report reveals that MIT was cognizant of the potential cultural and institutional backlash of the case; the university’s report makes clear that its administrators wanted to be as far away from any perception of involvement as possible. Swartz’s story along with MIT’s response provide an entry point into a discussion about how institutional authority, archiving, and digital technologies collide to create a forum for contemporary anxieties about a range of textual practices, both deemed appropriate and those deemed unauthorized or illicit.

A Barbaric Approach

One might ask why a dissertation on plagiarism begins with a chapter about hacking and other forms of textual barbarism. This chapter argues that Aaron Swartz is a fitting metonymy, even a meme, for textual practice that lay outside the gates of what has become textual authorization. Granted, such a move evacuates the more sentimental and personal aspects of his story but in service to an urgent conversation about best practices in a world full of texts that no longer reside simply on a shelf in a
designated place. While Swartz’s activities dealt much more with accessing information and distributing it to “unauthorized” readers, his intrusion made explicit avenues of access - and let us pause for a moment and consider that rather startling rhetorical turn – that one can have an unauthorized gaze, that there are texts in the world that only a few and privileged populations have a right to know. On the flip side of that equation lurks the unauthorized writers, those who operate outside what have become the acceptable forms of composition. What emerges in this chapter is a tale of savagery couched in the rhetoric of nativity. The barbarians are inside the gates.

To unpack these musings, this chapter first examines and proposes lineage for a metaphor – in this case, the idea of the noble savage as a way to read the “digital native.” Then, it will search two categories of texts for the rhetoric of digital nativity and demonstrate how nativity frames the discussion of digital literacy or fluency. This rhetoric also reveals the anxiety surrounding plagiarism, an anxiety this dissertation aims to unpack and reorganize. The first category of text includes the scholarship that defines digital nativity and explores aspects of digital literacy. Such scholarship supports a naturalization approach in which print culture has firmly placed textual production into a property and landscape discourse. This placement or displacement exposes the threat of plagiarism – as invasion, as theft, as an act (and a figure) that destroys or steals property and property rights.

The chapter uses Mark Prensky’s argument for digital native/digital immigrant that depicts natives and immigrants as physically as well as epistemologically distinct (3). Prensky draws on the echoes of the last few decades of neuroscience research that speculates about how technologies, specifically digital technologies, affect the human
brain but in his case, he focuses on how learners (natives) immersed in digital worlds think and internalize concepts differently from those whom he identifies as immigrants. This discourse contextualizes the anxiety over many textual practices, including plagiarism; the plagiarist becomes an “other” in this narrative – a marginal character or denizen that practices certain types of digital textual production outside the naturalized order. This otherness enacts a subaltern personification of the “native,” who must then be assimilated into the dominant textual culture. The plagiarist, consequentially, becomes a figure through which we can examine the native as savage.

The scholarship also reveals the emergent anxiety about literate hybridity – an anxiety that becomes apparent in the disjuncture between how digital literacy is described and the approaches that such scholarship offers as a means of cooperation – they are approaches of assimilation which further embed the digital nativity narrative in the frame of naturalization and colonization. As a disciplinary definition, the idea of digital nativity requires apparatuses that approve naturalization, which also requires systems of gatekeeping, definition, and authorization. In such approval structures, “surveillance is based on a system of permanent registration” (Foucault 196). Foucault's description of the panopticon works well in a disciplinary system based on surveillance and surveying. To inventory requires a level of quarantine and enacts a system of order. Surveys stand in as inventory devices and as such those who control the survey decide and incise – include and exclude.

The second category of texts focus on several published surveys which try to categorize writers and readers into prescribed zones – these surveys map writing practices to make them digestible for educators and the general public; however, this
mapping comes with dangerous presuppositions that are based on archaic concepts of textual production and therefore add to the contention over textual ownership. The “survey,” which has become such a dominant genre in governmental study and often is the backbone of big data, serves the dual purpose of gathering information and maintaining such information to further enclose populations in prescribed (rather than described) categories of literacy. The survey directly relates to zoning and mapping. The survey and surveillance also enact a narrative of spectatorism and spectaclism – turning the digital native, or perhaps the digital savage, into a subject/object of a gaze, a gaze that views literacy as a virtual parade.

Recent scholarship, as well as institutional and cultural texts, looks with a “literate gaze” that constructs the “digital native.” The 2003 National Center for Educational Statistics assessment of adult literacy, the 2006 National Survey of America’s College Students report “The Literacy of American College Students,” and the data compiled by the Pew Research Center on teenagers and technology represent more recent full scale data collection and analysis of the literacy levels of American adults and teenagers, and they serve as a baseline for understanding how the data on tech usage may signal the shifting landscape of literacy practices. Additionally, the studies reveal how defining levels of literacy prioritizes content over form, i.e. on what is being read/written rather than how (mode, medium) it is being read/written. These studies, although increasingly time stamped in a rapidly changing digital world, reveal a few factors, the most interesting of which are the rhetorical frames embedded in the questions, categories, and definitions of the surveys themselves.
Finally, this chapter will provide a pragmatic approach to negotiating this affect based on the genre of the intake form. This negotiation seeks to proceduralize student interaction with text and to provide a means through which educational institutions can both gather data but also begin to reflect on its own attachment to embedded notions of writing and text creation.

**Property Lines and Lineage**

Those institutions with educational (and in many ways cultural) authority most closely contend with issues such as open access, plagiarism, among other textual concerns, and therefore these institutions experience an increasing pressure to transform the culture’s approaches to textual practice. However, in that struggle and with rapidly emergent digital technologies, the desire for change now appears more like a need to change.

This imminent textual revolution, however, must encounter the [traditional] ceremonies tied to how culture views textual production and consumption at present, ceremonies which often intertwine with concepts of invention, originality, and yes, property. Prosecution, to a certain degree, is a pageantry that fortifies a legal tradition. When defining “invented traditions,” Hobsbawm argues that traditions and the ceremonies surrounding them are reiterative practices meant to “symbolize” what he calls “continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1). For example, intellectual property laws and their subsequent enforcements and prosecutions perform Hobsbawm’s definition. The advent of digital technologies creates an environment for mutiny where a subculture of criminals operates in the present tradition and yet lives in a possible future space.
The subtextual narrative that occurs and comes to light in cases like Swartz’s reveals the rather intense scrutiny and power the government employs when it comes to intellectual property cases – Swartz’s arrest and indictment demonstrate the anxiety which complements archiving. In one sense, the archive is “The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret” (Derrida, 10). Derrida explicates the complex nature of archiving and of the archive, which exacerbates the pressure between public and private spaces. As the materials in the archive move into a public space, they become subject to the laws and governing bodies that keep control of the archive, subject to the institutional conditions and guidelines which act at once to protect the archive but also to enclose it and to fortify it. Fortification substantiates the archive and objectifies it. In a real sense, fortification capitalizes (and perhaps capitolizes as well) the (A)rchive, which makes this collection of information into a place, a property, to be guarded.

Property, like God and Country, carries with it a properness that demands the capital letter. While landscapes can be seen as free and unbounded with little use for capitols or capitals, Property is the site of enclosure and fencing. But as with any lines that mark difference, property lines act as points of negotiation – lines mark the between and are in between; these lines perform the political, social, and economic complexities of declaring ownership and present themselves as absolute when in fact they are fictional and ephemeral, contingent on a consensus, on consent to one’s signature, to another’s signature – to ownership. Consent is the substructure for laws that guard – laws stand in for the social contract.
While enclosure makes property real, cordons it off from the rest of the landscape, it is also an act of literacy, for enclosure is the work of zoning and mapping – cartography is the writing of space, the act of fictionalizing the land to mark and write on it, to make it real on paper, which is embedded in the very term itself – the making of charts. And charts are primitive marks of signature, and so, once again, enclosures act as signatures. And laws concerning property co-sign those signatures. As Emerson notes, government is the authority toward which property owners gesture, appeal, and “rely” on to protect the signature, to guard the enclosure. Governments often rely on the citizen’s perceptions of its institutional authority. Emerson’s words provide an appropriate frame for considering the ways in which such perceptions are internalized and made real.

This chapter employs Emerson’s observations to comment on the subsequent quote from the National Education Technology Plan (NETP), which tries to address, in part, ways to incorporate digital literacies and practices into classroom curriculum, an institutional place of authority. But the report as with much of the scholarship that examines digital literacy, commits a fundamental error – it sees digital literacy as an opportunity to create a community of others – to state the goal of assimilation simultaneously marginalizes a community and makes one apparatus (Education) into an institution into which this outsider community must fit. When the NETP presents traditional classroom practices, it at once defines and ceremonializes them and then naturalizes them by naming them as part of students’ daily lives (NETP report). Consequently, all those practices that are not named lay outside not only the classroom but outside daily life. It is a surreptitious agenda of colonization.
A Noble Native, A Digital Savage

As stated earlier, this chapter argues that using native narratives as a way of understanding textual practices invites a dangerous premise. There is a fine line between being a native and being a savage. In western traditions, the noble savage is a character traditionally misattributed to Rousseau, but in fact this colonial image evolves during the British literary tradition that emerged simultaneously with the colonization of non-Western areas in Asia, the Caribbean, and North America. The noble savage can be more critically read as a mashup of proto-anthropological travel literature, xenophobic and pre-nationalistic anxieties, and cultural justification for assimilation as progress. This figure postpones and defers dialogue between cultures; rather it creates a structural dynamic wherein primitivism, immaturity, and seeming uncivilized practices and behaviors become the object of elimination and/or assimilation but through a strikingly sentimental gaze.

This sentimentality can be seen in Dryden, for example, who saw the indigenous as a promise of the savior wrapped in the impoverished, the savage as free from society. “I am as free as nature first made man/Ere the base laws of servitude began/When wild in woods the noble savage ran” (Conquest of Granada). Dryden’s romanticism of the native as savage and thus as free from social service gets told and retold through many contemporary thinkers, including Rousseau. At the heart of this sentiment lies the idea that the native is man’s natural state of being and this ideal gives rise to political theories from Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, to name the trinity of social contract theorists. The natural state of man informs enlightenment models of law and government since much of those models argue that such primitive nature must be regulated by laws. The basic fear (and ideal) is that going unchecked, the natural state
of man is selfish and does not automatically serve the common good, which is an often familiar indictment of digital natives or digital learners.

In her recent work, Baronness Susan Greenfield, represents a version of this panicked reaction but from a neuroscientific angle. Greenfield's *Mind Change* proposes that digital technologies, especially social media, is causing adaptive changes in the human brain and thus affecting human consciousness. Her scholarship is controversial because of its rather blatant criticism of this change but hers is just another iteration of scholarship that includes writers such as Rotman, Kurzweil, and other futurists who come from a wide range of backgrounds, particularly in the sciences. Additionally, in the past decade publishers have adopted the popular habit of using in-depth academic research to produce general audience books such as Post’s catalogue of anti-technology works, Jackson’s call to anxiety in *Distracted*, Palfrey’s *Born Digital*, Boyd’s *It’s Complicated*, Dweck’s *Mindset*, Gladwell’s *Outliers*, Carr’s *The Shallows*, and so on. The publication and distribution of these materials contest, to a certain degree, the public’s curiosity with digital technologies and how they affect performance, production, and yes, the affective lives of human beings. Even Tesla CEO Elon Musk sounded the alarm in late 2014 about his fears for humanity if something like artificial intelligence were to come into being. In a strange way, the noble savage has reemerged as the digital hybrid, the cyborg, the human/not human.

In a chronological sense, the evolution of the noble savage occurred parallel with the developing conversations about the political and economic benefits and dangers of colonization. The noble savage then, in many ways, is a structural shadow in the work of postcolonial scholars such as Spivak, Said, and others who turned critical eyes on
the Western brand of colonization. The indigenous-cum-savage makes explicit the boundaries between civilization and de-civilization, which for dominant and colonizing forces is an important line to hold since that line is the place where the frontier can either be named promised land or dead’s man territory. And laws, governments, and other institutions of collective authority are tasked with holding those lines, defining the behaviors and practices that fall within them, and somewhat simultaneously, those behaviors and practices that fall outside the lines.

In the worlds of textual compositions, literacy and its various definitions represent the collective authority and thus establish boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable practices.

**The Literate, the Illiterate, and the Young Adult**

Literacy, for the purposes of this chapter, extends beyond basic understanding of written language. Literacy, here, mirrors the perception of literacy in cultural and educational settings; we live in an age where there are new literacies, digital literacies, cultural literacies, and yes, simple and basic literacy. The emergence of digital technologies may make such an observation simultaneously vatic and dated. Digital technologies have made the ability to communicate seem immediate and intimately connected to the global stage that they test the need for traditional modes of expression, such as essays, scholarly articles, and other authorized acts of writing and literacy.

When a tweet can be the chain in the series of revolutionary actions, such as in the case of the 2011 Mubarak overthrow in Egypt, then can acts of literacy be measured accurately by standards of print culture? As Bustillos notes in his May 2011 article “Wikipedia and the Death of the Expert,” “Learning' no longer means sitting passively in
a lecture hall or on in front of a television or in a library and waiting to receive the
‘authoritative’ version of what the experts think is up as if it were a Communion wafer”
technologies resist the preeminent structures and institutions of knowledge such as
national education systems, systems which are the authority figures that define,
measure, and assess acts such as literacy and expertise. So questions we are asking
ourselves sound more and more like these: What does it mean to read and write and
think in a digital age? How are those acts different from those of the print age, if at all?
Are these technologies evolutionary or revolutionary? Who are most affected by the
distinction between print and digital literacies? And finally, how does being literate also
entail being illiterate or illegitimately literate?

This section focuses on three areas of study. First, the initial studies of literacy
and emergent televisual and digital technologies help to understand the tension
surrounding institutional concepts of literacy and the practices of those outside those
institutions. McLuhan, Ong, and Ulmer highlight these tensions and prepare the
discussion that focuses strictly on digital or “new” literacy. Second, studies and theories
by Jenkins, Lanham, Knobel and Lankshear, Prensky, and Rheingold establish the most
current discourse around young adult literacy and educational response to these literacy
practices

While there are a plethora of studies and theories about literacy that reach back
to the Enlightenment, the most recent scholarship on literacy relies on three key figures.
Marshall McLuhan’s The Gutenberg Galaxy and Understanding Media launched the late
20th century study of televisual intelligence. These texts not only took advantage of
textual and graphic elements, but they pushed the boundaries of what had been accepted theories of literacy. McLuhan’s influence on the discussions of literacies, both old and new, cannot be underestimated. However, the technology of the 1960s could not fully anticipate the dynamic changes that would occur with computer technologies. McLuhan does intuit the coming shift in *The Medium is the Massage* (1967). The text finds its meaning in the juxtaposition of images with text, taking the opportunity to perform the often chaotic and associative nature of media technologies. Yet, McLuhan’s vision is limited when it comes to invention. He sees media as an environment within which we as humans must adapt, “Now we have to adjust, not to invent. We have to find environments in which it will be possible to live with our new inventions” (124).

McLuhan’s observation is conspicuously apocalyptic, envisioning that there are no new inventions to come. And it is a framing mechanism through which much of media literacy and digital literacy is subsequently seen. That we must abide in the environment and such rhetoric contributes to a sense of helplessness in what will become the rapidly shifting literacies of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

In 1980, Ong’s *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* appears when the advent of personal computer technology intersects with the ongoing televisual, audio, and other media technology revolutions. For Ong literacy is social, political, and psychological and whenever a shift occurs that affects the structure of literacy, a structure humans have come to rely on, then “to disassociate words from writing is psychologically threatening, for literates’ sense of control over language is closely tied to the visual transformation of language” (14). Ong’s theory takes from Havelock, who first wrote about the shift from oral culture to print in his *Preface to Plato*, and examines
the place of apprenticeship and discipleship as it applies to literacy practices. Both note
that oral cultures depend on mimicry and imitation, the assimilation of habit, which print
culture externalizes in writing. Writing, then, allows for a disciplinary study rather than a
disciplined study. There is a difference, and now that we are again facing a revised
technology of learning and knowing, in the way of digital platforms, the shift in the
structures of disciplinary study must also change and shift. But do we adapt as
McLuhan charges or do we reinvision what invention and discovery entail?

Both Ong and McLuhan coincide with the pedagogical interests of Gregory Ulmer
who sees the emergent technologies of the word as an opportunity to not only teach
students about writing in digital and televisual mediums, but also as an opportunity to
understand how theories of creativity can be sustained and capitalized on. His theory,
Electracy, relies on Derridean deconstruction as well as theories of art and aesthetics.
The combination of these approaches sees the transformational technologies as lines of
inquiry, rather than simply containing lines of inquiry. By making the technology the
focus of invention and inquiry, Ulmer’s Electracy posits that media is not only
environment but a constructed environment over which members can have some
jurisdiction, as much as one can have over language. But also Electracy pushes
participants to see the limits, the potential boundaries of these technologies, and to
transgress those arbitrary lines, a method he fortified in Teletheory (2004) and
Heuretics (1994). The term “heuretics” is important to this discussion because it sees
student capacity for producing not only products but theories. However, as we will see
later in this essay, Ulmer’s theory is a much more generous vision of the student writer,
of the young adult capacity to make things and theories.
In later work, such as in Richard Lanham’s *The Electronic Word*, the democratizing potential of digital literacy emerges as an important part of the scholarship. Lanham argues that digital technologies challenge the “curatorial and interpretive” powers of institutions such as the university (134). The challenge to such authoritative structures now seems inherent to the anxiety about digital literacy. Lanham’s work echoes Henry Jenkins’s initial research (*Textual Poachers*, 1992) about fandom. Jenkins also notes this authorial anxiety in his study of fan culture, which he will later re-signify as participatory culture, and the threat digital access to texts pose to other institutions of archival power such as the entertainment and publishing industries. Both Lanham and Jenkins focus on how the idea of canonical texts corresponds to the hierarchical structures of protection that surround authorized institutions. The content, then, mimics the form in some fundamental ways, and to return to Ong, this is a way of internalizing print culture and its accompanying epistemologies. Digital technology, on the one hand, makes educational materials more accessible, makes education more liberal, but on the other hand, it also de-authorizes the power of what Lanham would call the guardians. Thus, while digital literacy emerges from print literacy, as did print from orality, it also acts as a critique of prior practices, a critique that contributes to the unease experienced by those studying the new literate.

James Gee offers a coherent approach to digital literacy with the concept of situated learning. His most current theories grow out of his experience with gaming and gaming pedagogy, which he chronicled in *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy* (2003). Gee proposes video games as platforms that stress interactivity and “situated cognition.” Situated cognition emerges from the discourse
community argument that sees learning as contextualized and always depended on continuing construction of a social space with shared interests, goals, and language. So the content of the video game is less important than the gaming community that surrounds video games. Gee generalizes his argument in *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling* (2004) and adds to a continuingly increasing criticism of what has been deemed “traditional” pedagogy, which is generally represented by lecture, testing, and essay writing classroom practices.

Pedagogical theories such as Gee’s converge with those who are interested in the difference between those who developed skills through print as the main vehicle of information distribution and those who developed skills through digital technologies. The physical changes to the page, as noted by Eshet Alkalai and Hamburger in 2004, has caused a distinct gap in skill sets between young adults and those over the age of 30. Yoran Eshet-Alkalai (2004) identified five types of literacies in digital techniques: (1) photo-visual literacy, (2) reproduction literacy, (3) information literacy, (4) branching literacy, and (5) socio-emotional literacy (94). The study showed that “. . . for the tasks that emphasize creativity and critical thinking (reproduction and information tasks), the performance of the younger participants decreased significantly, whereas the adults improved slightly” (715). Eshet-Alkalai, et.al. observe a statistical phenomenon that has been worried over with an intuitive sense by the general public. While young adults seemingly have technical skills (although that has come under question as well), they are perceived as having increasingly smaller sets of traditional creative skills, such as critical and creative thinking. The question becomes, then, is that an accurate perception? New literacy studies seek to address that question in part.
Scholars interested in writing pedagogy have attempted to align theories of writing with these emergent technologies. Lankshear and Knobel have a body of work that addresses the difficulties and challenges that teachers face. Not only do teachers have to consider the complicated epistemologies of these mediums and how they affect student learning, but they also have to keep pace with the brisk pace of technological innovation in an environment where planned obsolescence is part of the design process. This double task often exacerbates the affect already present in the teaching of writing and other practices of literacy such as reading, “Being literate in any of the myriad forms literacies take presupposes complex amalgams of propositional, procedural, and ‘performative’ forms of knowledge. Making meaning is knowledge-intensive, and much of the knowledge that school-based learning is required to develop and mobilize is knowledge involved in meaning making” (19). The complexity that Knobel and Lankshear note connects to other definitions of literacy, especially those espoused by Gee and others who advocate discourse communities as the primary framework for language and knowledge acquisition. As with any meaning-making activity, the technique and technologies involved should be part of the inquiry process, something that Ulmer signaled in Electracy and what has become a principal subtext of digital pedagogies. Yet, an affect still surrounds certain skills or aspects of digital literacy that are especially pertinent to this dissertation, such as citation and hyperlink practices that digital technologies make obsolete.

The obsolescence of such practices and the emergence of other practices, such as the internet meme, help unlock the anxiety surrounding the place of citation in a seemingly endless system of access that cannot be traced or tracked or recorded. This
“freedom” pushes back against a panopticonic gaze and challenges the authority of the enclosure. The internet meme, especially, demonstrates the co-optability of texts and how texts can spread without an ontological marker, without source. The internet meme duplicates what Yoran Eshet Alkalai calls “reproduction literacy,” which he advocates as one of five literacies required in the digital age (2003). This literacy practice also mimics the skills which Jenkins advocates in his white paper on 21st Century new media literacy, skills that include play, simulation, and appropriation (2007).

The internet meme is a practice that in its function utilizes parody, gossip, and reproducibility in its basic structure. I use the term “practice” in a conscious sense here. Memes are performances as much as they are representations. There are databank sites such as 4chan that prove to be dumping grounds for these images, but most consumers of these images don’t seek citation or source. At one particular site, memegenerator.net, images are dropped in and made available to all participants. The image becomes a site of humor, satire, or even critique. Its popularity, particularly among young adults, may depict an expertise with writing in image and text that institutions have ignored because of its generally satiric (or parodic) nature. The meme, in many ways is a parody in the way that Hutcheon defines it as “a form of repetition, from an ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity” (xvii). The internet meme can be seen as a system of redundant and repetitive critique not only of the content, but also the structure of citation. The meme is made and distributed for consumption. The meme mimics the structure of rumor and gossip, which citation is designed to combat. Citation authorizes threads of discourse and as a consequence,
un-authorizes others. Citation also has the ability to propagandize materials, which the structure of rumor and gossip can either reinforce or undermine.

Rumor and gossip are seemingly rhizomatic and unauthorized threads of information. However, as noted by Rosnow and Foster, rumor and gossip are not structurally identical. Rumor is based on selective information sharing (Heath et al.); gossip is generally internal and group specific (Dunbar). But in a later study, Rosnow and Foster, among others, note that the social network structure of digital technology may alter rumor and gossip in fundamental ways. The social network analysis demonstrates that “denser networks are less vulnerable to social fragmentation from gossip,” which implies that gossip structures are slowly replaced by connectivity and speed of information transfer. Rosnow and Foster also note that social networks create “gatekeeping” devices that monitor the network, much in the same way that citation is set up to monitor scholarship and information. Rumor and gossip, along with the satiric nature of the meme, perform several acts of illiterate behavior that mark digital literacy as a rebellion against sanctioned structures of print culture such as citation. These practices and structures exist outside the prescribed venues of distribution and authorization systems that are in place, and furthermore, they in their very function and structure obscure the names of authors; the meme gets dumped into the large vat of information. The resulting popularity of many of these memes, such as the “Why U No?” and other such images and videos, also reveal the predominance of mash-up and remix as a compositional mode. The materials are made available to share and manipulate, which vexes traditional writing notions of invention and originality.
The internet meme is an example of a set of practices that exist outside the enclosure of literacy. These practices have become the focal point of discourse for scholars and over the past decade one “personification” of the digital practitioner has emerged, the “digital native.”

**Naturalization and Colonization of Digital Natives**

As the rhetoric of new literacy has flourished, one term has become a controversial symbol of the debate about how to not only teach with digital technology but how to teach for those who have grown up with digital technology as their primary mode of representation. Prensky (2001) introduced the expression “digital native” as a way to understand the practices and theories of those born in the age of digital technology. Prensky argues that digital natives can be differentiated from digital immigrants by the comfort level with which they perform specific tasks that he defines as digital in nature, such as multitasking, instant information access, and gaming. The dichotomy of the immigrant versus native rhetoric is politically powerful, but it also implies something further, something more subtle about how scholars view digital practices. To assign nativity to a population performs the following three definitions: (1) a native is a natural citizen, (2) through naturalization, the native has a privilege of calling a place home instead of acting as a squatter or homesteader, and (3) by way of naturalization and nativity, one risks sentimentalizing the native but also trying to assimilate the native into immigrant status. Prensky’s term has not proceeded without controversy. Scholars such as Gee, Eshet-Alkalai, and Jenkins, among others, have expressed implicit and explicit criticisms of this distinction. One of the more stringent criticisms of the narrative comes from Helsper and Eymon (2010) who call into question the label of native and its possible negative consequences, and they further critique the
lack of evidence that shows a generational gap in the learning mechanisms (cognitive) that young natives use as opposed to older immigrants or those even outside the digital native rhetoric. However, the term remains as part of the overall framework that contains digital literacy scholarship. I would conjecture that the native rhetoric is not only colonial in its characterization, but that by using the term “native” the collective gaze of literacy has chosen a population to both suspect and idealize to watch and record.

What does it mean then to identify a person as a native? Generally nativity is defined as being born to a particular place, such as in the United States where nativity is determined by citizenship or by being Native American. The dual concept of nativity plagues modern institutions; how does one naturalize the non-native? The “native” has a long history in western culture, and specifically US culture, as an object of a particularly nostalgic and patristic gaze. Hobbes’ *Leviathan* warns us against the natural state of man, a state that must be controlled and legislated by royal authority. Rousseau would later romanticize this figure as one of happiness, even if the need for government and collective agreement would civilize and destroy this natural state of man.

Other reports of native behaviors and resource allocation can be found from Franklin to Dickens to Crane, and so forth. And so when employed as a frame for understanding literacy, the term carries with it the historical and political baggage of colonialism, imperialism, and yes, economy. If we frame literacy within a native rhetoric, then we cannot escape the political ramifications of this narrative and how it inherently “others” the very population that it seeks to see as native. The naturalization narrative is directly tied to the nativity narrative, and the increasing popularity of “digital nativism” as a metaphor for understanding digital literacies underscores the connection between
metaphors of property and land and metaphors of reading and writing. Natives exist before property lines and in the Hobbes tradition of nativism, the native is also the primitive state of man, before law and order but also in need of law and order. The native, however, is a construct of the imperial gaze, and even as Rousseau’s contradictory romanticization and demonization of the native has taken hold of the western imagination, it must not be forgotten that a native is a simple measurement of invasion and occupation. The need to preserve is a forerunner to abjection because preservation is almost always preservation of boundaries, of property lines.

**Enclosure as Sight, Site, Cite….Literacy as Gaze**

This section examines two studies of adult literacy practices in the form of surveys performed by Pew Research and the American Institute of Research and show how accredited views of literacy help to exacerbate the anxieties surrounding the so-called “digital native.” The intersection of these three foci establish the background necessary to read how concepts of the “future” of literacy purposefully envision an apocalyptic end to print literacy, and how this apocalypse is the motivating factor to protect against any practices that can be perceived as threatening such as the hybrid or chimera.

Literacy, which has undergone both subtle and dramatic transformations in definition, replicates an act of enclosure. One way to enclose is through a prescribed apparatus of recording. In the case of literacy, literacy has been enclosed by literacy surveys. Such surveys have long been designed to calculate levels of literacy, from basic to proficient; these surveys attempt to authorize knowledge of the world, to enclose it as a thing we can see and thus literacy is the material proof of knowledge and information. In its 2006 executive summary on the literacy of American college students,
the American Institute of Research argued that “Every adult needs a range of literacy skills to achieve his or her personal goals, pursue a successful career, and play an active role as a citizen. High levels of literacy also enable individuals to keep pace with changing educational expectations and technologies and support the aspirations of their families” (www.air.org). This report speaks with the authority of governmental support and funding and reinforces the connection between access and literacy.

Literacy practices that are acknowledged as points of access provide opportunity. Such sentiments are not new observations. Opportunity is an entrenched theme of the American identity; it buttresses the American Dream, the chief myth of US culture; a myth that is made possible by literacy, not democracy. Literacy, then, can be read as capital and therefore, lack of literacy, as a certain kind of poverty or lack of access/opportunity and in an extension of that logic, perhaps un-American.

The history of the illiterate “other” and its tangential loss of political power are deeply embedded in the narrative of American citizenship. For example, in the early 20th century Deep South of the United States, literacy was the test of citizenship, an obstacle placed between those who had little to no access to literacy education (traditionally African-Americans) and the right to vote, the right to have a political voice. Literacy is a placeholder for a skill set that appears to have political autonomy, but perhaps it is also a term that allows systems of information control and distribution, such as a national education system, to enclose citizens within parameters. Perhaps literacy is a type of property that must be enclosed and all acts of literacy considered outside these parameters, these fences, are illegitimate and illicit acts. For a dissertation on plagiarism, understanding what falls outside of literacy in the digital age is of utmost
importance for it too signals a loss of voice, but the question is whose voice is silenced in plagiarism? The loss of voice is tied to the experience of being seen and looked upon as outside the boundaries of literacy, and for the purpose of this chapter, I would like to define the measurement of literacy as the literate gaze.

The literate gaze is an apparatus of objection and abjection. Abjection, as Kristeva defines it, is the process that “does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger” (9). To invoke the abjection here is to recognize a diminishing type of literacy, print literacy. The loss of the print world’s dominance over information distribution and hence control and guardianship is emblematic of a shift in communication technologies that make public what had been private, such as the case with social media programs that connect people in living room chatter and collective event witnessing.

Kristeva argues that abjection is a moment when the self is depleted, excoriated from all previous boundaries that mark the self, such as bodily waste or castration. Her embodied rhetoric helps us to understand how the literate gaze is an abject one. It is a gaze that seeks to retain the boundaries of print literacy, by using levels of proficiency that are still tied to classic models such as instructions, which are often seen as the most basic level of literacy according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The abject literate gaze also acts to naturalize literacy. How? The process of naturalizing literacy occurs in both institutional and cultural ways. For instance, the US citizenship test for immigrants requires knowledge of a wide range of uniquely American histories and idioms. To be naturalized then requires one to be a certain kind of literate. The insidious nature of literacy standards extend beyond citizenship by virtue of an
increasing reliance on testing as education, assessment as evaluation, and finally, knowledge as material. The materiality of knowledge supports literacy movements.

Writing happens under an authorized gaze in this organization – and as writing changes and adapts to the technologies that make it more accessible and malleable to broader and hidden populations, the survey fails to account for those populations. The digital native moniker is much like the noble savage rhetoric of those with enlightenment era values. There is an unknown landscape, a world that has been discovered, or made real and perhaps even invented that pushes back on previously accepted concepts and constructs of the old world of print. Tangent to this, institutions much like royal houses and churches of the religious era perform a monitoring mechanism, one that tries to contain and solidify traditional lines of authority that are under attack or perceived to be under attack by the new “knowledges” that come from the new world.

Recent literacy surveys conducted by the US Department of Education should be interrogated for how they are used to represent literacy as well as the definition of ordained levels of literacy. The surveys represent the institutional boundaries and lines that have been implemented to enclose literacy practices from those deemed non-literate, but as we will see, the recent research from the Pew Research Center on technology use among adolescents problematize traditionally authorized acts of literacy.

National Center for Educational Statistics on Adult Literacy and the National Survey of America’s College Students report “The Literacy of American College Students”

The NCES 2005 report on adult literacy used data gathered in a 2003 survey on literacy. The center, however, categorizes literacy in three types: document, prose, and quantitative literacies. Each type was based on the following definition, “using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop
one’s knowledge and potential” (2). The report biases, from its inception, materials that are printed and written and those that are in “English.” The study compared data to a 1992 study it had completed and found “improvements” across the board, in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity. The data is less important, though, than the scales and definitions that are used to define not only literacy but levels of literacy. Ranging from below basic to proficient, the NCES levels identify where a person fits into a larger conception of literacy. For example, a proficient level “indicates skills necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities” that include “reading lengthy, complex, abstract prose texts as well as synthesizing information and making complex inferences” (3) The emphasis on prose is by the NCES. Prose texts are often text-only documents, so the priority here seems to indicate a bias towards print-only information. The NCES uses this information to construct “profiles” of its subjects based on politically controversial categories such as gender, class, age, and race. To further complicate the agenda of the study, the NCES notes that “The percentage of adults with less than a high school degree or GED/Equivalency decreased by 6 percentage points, while more adults completed an associate’s degree or more education” (14). The implication, of course, encourages the audience to connect levels of literacy to levels of traditional educational levels. Additionally, the study notes that between 1992 and 2003 (when the data was collected), literacy levels in the age groups (19-24) and (25-39) “significantly” dropped, with the 25-39 year-old group decreasing from 33% to 28%. It’s important to also note that the study was sponsored by the Department of Education and includes the types of questions and documents used for the surveys, documents which were primarily print text dominant.
In 2006 the NSACS report “The Literacy of American College Students” begins with the following observation in its executive summary, “Every adult needs a range of literacy skills to achieve his or her personal goals, pursue a successful career, and play an active role as a citizen. High levels of literacy also enable individuals to keep pace with changing educational expectations and technologies and support the aspirations of their families” (4). This quasi-mission statement would appear to recognize the various kinds of literacies demanded of future citizens, literacies that may not be fully represented by the NCES report. However, in a contradictory move, the NSACS report uses the categories and levels forwarded by the Department of Education and NCES to measure the literacy of college students. The NSACS report reads as a long form justification for higher education, using the NCES data and findings to continually point to how college graduates consistently perform higher on these tasks and how the higher one’s grade point average, the more likely a graduate is to have higher literacy scores. Although it is interesting to note that most of the points emphasized by the NSACS findings focused on the document and quantitative literacies rather than prose literacy. Both studies, however, point to the construction of prose and print-only text as the defining factor of a certain type of literacy. What, then, does this imply for those immersed in digital environments where print is part of a mashup of information and presentation?

Pew Research Center

The Pew Research Center has focused much of its attention on cataloging and analyzing the changes that new technologies signal for media, education, and other socioeconomic areas and issues. Some of their findings clarify the stakes involved in understanding and teaching for those who have grown up in an increasingly digital
writing/reading environment. In their 2010 report on teenagers and social media use, the PRC noted “As of September 2009, 93% of American teens between the ages of 12 and 17 went online, a number that has remained stable since November 2006” (5). In 2011, another report on teenagers and texting observed that “The median number of texts (i.e. the midpoint user in our sample) sent on a typical day by teens 12-17 rose from 50 in 2009 to 60 in 2011” (2). And in July 2012, the PRC released a long report on the future of the university in the internet age and introduced the study with this information, “Yet another Pew Research Center survey in 2011 found that 75% of adults say college is too expensive for most Americans to afford.3 Moreover, 57% said that the higher education system in the U.S. fails to provide students with good value for the money they and their families spend” (2). The study implicates technology in a large scale epistemological shift in how information is delivered, the apparatus from which young people (here I speak of those considered “teenagers”) gather their information about the world.

The numbers often mimic the anecdotal evidence as well. However, these results must always be measured against access to such technology, as noted in their 2011 article Bayne and Ross invoke the Krause study (2007) “that reports on a study of first year students in Australian universities, finding that their experiences and understandings of technology vary significantly according to socio-economic background, age and gender”(1). The intersections of poverty and literacy have been the focus of much scholarship over the last two decades. The fear of the achievement gap between students in high poverty areas have been compared to those with who
have access to the technologies, skills, and teachers that serve a lower poverty, higher income population.

The compilation of data by the PRC chronicles the rapid change from print-based textual production and consumption to a digital-based system; how this transition affects literacy cannot be overstated. The tie between technology (mobile, digital, accessible) collides with traditional institutions of print, such as the university. While the information gathered by PRC and other research centers like University of California’s DMLcentral (Digital Media and Learning) point to the changing skills and expertise of adolescents, established institutions of authority have been slow to respond to these changes, as indicated by the literacy surveys included above. In fact, the push to measure literacy enacts the naturalization process that the rhetoric of digital nativity intuits, or perhaps even invites.

Through measure the Department of Education has named certain types of literacy (prose, document, quantitative) and by naming these literacies has authorized them. As legitimized referents then, these categories become part of a panopticonic process – the gaze of literacy. The literate gaze sentimentalizes its native as child, as victim, as threat, and as the savage who cannot fully take advantage of the resources at hand; this gaze sees the native as potential and as obstacle. Now take that gaze and point it at a particular set of skills, like reading and writing, and the gaze laser focuses on the lack of resource control. The literate gaze, then, can tie its history to the birth of the reader and the death of the author (Barthes). We can see this imperial presence in catch phrases such as “an economy of words” or the push for clarity, simplicity, and above all else, transparency, a form of language nakedness that venerates form as non-
form. The death of the sentence, as Follett worried over, cannot happen under the panopticonic literate gaze because such a gaze depends on the sentence, on sentencing.

The gaze here must then be turned back on ourselves then, on our expectations, our standards. When the basic literacy level is a simple understanding of instructions, what do we leave out of those basic understandings? What are the parameters of these instructions, these modes? Here the cultural critics who advocate an ED Hirsch approach to culture would argue that "we" have lost basic literacy and that when McDonald’s has to post pictures instead of words, we are in danger of evolving to the intellectual apocalypse as shown in the 2001 film *Idiocracy*. Hedges further extends Hirsch’s argument but from a liberal perspective when he writes in *Empire of Illusion* that literacy has faded in the wake of celebrity culture.

The apocalyptic narrative around public education is telling; the chicken little arguments portray the American public education system as ill equipped and out of touch with the needs of the job market and even out of touch with simple humanistic tasks such as appreciating literature or reading books. And to a degree, the education system is complicit in its own extinction. The extinction narrative, which is the Darwinistic version of the apocalypse, can be seen in the microcosmic anxiety about literacy practices such as citation and its evil twin, plagiarism.

Our own collective guilt in the face of changing technologies – savages because we don’t understand them, not because they are by virtue or nature, savages. Savagery is a good metaphor because it encapsulates the nativity narrative and the danger of nostalgia/sentimentality.
To be literate is to be real, but what boundaries, what property lines, designate what literacy is and what it is not? The ambiguity of literacy is made even more potent by rapidly spreading communication technologies, and this leads to an interesting movement of literacy that has occurred in the last century, but even more blatantly, in the last two decades. That movement involves the literate gaze’s perception of young adults – not children, who are malleable and always potential, but adolescents who have been shaped by technology and education.

A Pragmatic Approach

One way to distort or even abort the authority of the literate gaze is to reflect on its power. In order to do that one suggestion would be to proceduralize how we account for literacy on a local level rather than on the national scales which have become popular in the areas of big data research. Foundations like Carnegie, MacArthur, and even the Pew Research Center search for large scale trends via large scale data, and while such data can provide important information for funding and even for cultural trending, the real work must be done in a local context. How do we address that in a procedural way that will allow writing teachers and other interested parties in writing studies to address the seeming disconnect between real-life textual production in a digital age where the share, like, and reblog buttons devalue or at least create workable shortcuts around citation? We can avail ourselves of the tools of our field – the ability to understand discourse communities and how documents and forms of writing work in those discourse communities. In his work on genre, Bawarshi analyzed the use of the Patient Medical History Form in medicine. Bawarshi notes that analyzing such a genre grants insight to the modes of operation in a doctor’s office but even more so how doctors regard their patients, as their symptoms, as their histories (551). This form, like
most forms, tries to distill down practice into consumable materials. Such a form has power because it requires the patient to account for the history of his/her body in a textual forum.

Doctors generally do not have the time to listen to extended patient narratives – whether that is good or bad is a judgment call. A practitioner such as Sherwin Nuland would disagree; he argues that narrative reveals much of a patient’s medical history without the form. To a degree, the form can be prevaricated, creating a conundrum much like those encountered by the character of House on the television show *House*. So forms are not impenetrable nor are infallible, but like the big data of surveys, they can be part of an aggregate of information local writing programs can use to determine the textual practices with which incoming and even current students are familiar.

My practical suggestion for negotiating the affect that accompanies the fear of plagiarism is to provide a student intake form during the first year class or even before, during whatever version of an orientation session the students must go through before full admission. This form would require students to speak about their practices as both writers in education but also their habits outside of educational settings. The intake would be much like the medical intake form, but it would also include narrative sections – sections that can be used to code the data and start to understand how students understand citation, understand plagiarism, understand what it means to attribute. It would also allow specific local questions – how the individual institution views writing.

For some colleges and universities it's important that students prepare for writing across the disciplines or across the curriculum while others believe that the first year writing courses are fundamentally a part of a liberal arts education. This intake form could also
be a situation or occasion during which writing programs can define their terms of agreement for the student.

The more students understand the internalization of literacy practices by the institution the more they may understand how to negotiate them, but furthermore, we are tasked with educating students so that they can challenge the authority from which and by which they are educated, so they too perhaps can make a stand such as Swartz but without the tragic consequences.

The social contract of literacy is transforming in the light of emergent technologies. Technologies that make writing faster, easier, more accessible challenge the gatekeeping duties of the university, of higher education. The savages are in the village. The barbarians are at the gates.
CHAPTER 4
A DISSOLVING CONTRACT: WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, PRINT AUTHORITY, AND PLAGIARISM

“The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”

Most stories about plagiarism, from popular anecdotes to extensive scholarly studies, start with the problem of defining plagiarism, often turning toward tradition, toward history. As my epigraph from Emerson suggests, however, definitions that start with “past acts” risk substituting a nostalgic gaze for a reasoned one, which can blind the investigator to what is at stake in stories about plagiarism. This chapter does not contest the general definition of plagiarism as unauthorized appropriation of another’s words and ideas and passing them off as one’s own, nor does it re-define plagiarism in some more precise manner. In the grand scheme of all literacies and fluencies, plagiarism will turn out to be a passing problem, one that is rooted in a specific historical context and that, as this context changes, plagiarism will eventually cease to be the controversial issue in its current form.

As gestured to in previous chapters, the pressure of institutionalization coincides with a colonial imperative. To institutionalize is a nostalgic move for it ratifies constitution into absolute states when in fact they are transitive and transient.

To unpack this assertion, the chapter will view plagiarism as a challenge to traditional concepts of textual authority, authority that is reinforced and preserved by professional academic organizations, specifically the Council of Writing Program
Administrators (WPA). The WPA’s authority has been constituted from a tradition of protest movements within the discipline of English studies, and that authority is further enhanced and maintained by the unstated social contract that has developed in tandem with print literacy and its accompanying notions of single authorship and citation ethics. As digital literacy and fluency practices and collaborative and multi-authored modes of authorship increase, professional organizations must not only adapt and create best practices models but they must shift their fundamental assertions about what constitutes a text and its creation. The chapter calls on the WPA to turn towards the experts in digital literacy and yes, the digital humanities, to help compose a more relevant and practical statement not of “best” practices but of self-critical, hence potentially effective, practices when it comes to plagiarism. If it is to maintain any authority over the issue, the WPA must surrender its entrenched reverence of authorial sovereignty and revise its statement of best practices accordingly.

A Constitution of the Writing “We”

Defining an idea such as plagiarism relies on employing a traditional voice of authority and such authority usually surfaces in organizational documents that speak in a multi-vocal cadence, a “we” that can speak with a collective authority. When I invoke the “we” in this chapter, I emphasize the “we” in quotation marks. Although writing faculty and administrators are part of a larger writing population, “we” are still isolated from an even larger world of authorship and production. We encounter a very small percentage of “writers” and yet we often mistake our value system as common ground, our expectations as universal standards. For the discipline of writing studies, its collective authority has increasingly been invested in the Council of Writing Program Administrators, established in 1978. The WPA, as it has been popularly named,
publishes journals, maintains an active online discussion list, hosts professional conferences, and has in recent years began a preliminary process of accreditation that includes on-site campus visits and evaluations of writing programs across the United States. The WPA addresses, in part, the needs of a marketplace, the market of academic writing, and acts first as an organization. In many ways, then, the WPA has gathered an authority to speak in the first person plural.

The history of the WPA closely aligns with the establishment of other professional organizations, especially in the field of English studies – generally these organizations were born of protest movements. In 1911, the NCTE organized in response to a perceived standardization movement, “The founders of the NCTE saw themselves as representing the interests of public secondary education and state universities against the efforts of newly formed college associations, which, dominated by Eastern private schools, were attempting to establish a uniform college-preparatory curriculum” (Tunam 346). After the NCTE’s establishment, the question of teaching writing focused on how to teach students to not only observe rules of grammar but to move into expressive and other forms of writing, which troubled many in the field of linguistics (Marckwardt 108). The establishment of the NCTE answered, in part, the standardization movement, but as the teaching of writing and especially first-year composition, became more and more a part of college curriculum, the history of writing instruction and its laborers haunts the rhetoric of such instruction. Berlin, Connors, Crowley, McLeod, White, Young, and others echo the historical impulse of writing studies; there seems a need to look backward in order to look forward, a notion that is
simultaneously ironic and necessary because often authority comes from precedent, but so does bad practice.

The movement to categorize writing practices and pedagogies coincided with the rise of creative writing programs, as noted by McGurl; these institutionalizing movements sought to programmatize writing into different categories, especially during the postwar era. As writing became an embedded part of general education, the need for writing administration grew and out of that growth a new discontent emerged. As the debate over the intellectual work and labor distribution of WPAs continued during the middle to late 20th century, the WPA was constituted in part to address the neglect of WPA labor and research by the NCTE, MLA, and CCCC. However, “past acts” participate partly alongside more undetectable forms of authority. The authority to speak in the “we” is often predicated on a series of social contracts, contracts that are based on epistemological stances about writing and authorship, as well as those pragmatic contracts based on histories, past acts, and credibility.

The WPA’s history contributes to its authority; print culture and its fundamental assumptions about authentic acts of writing maintain such authority. The Council of Writing Program Administrators developed out of the tension and ambiguity surrounding three major definitions: (i) what does it mean to teach writing, (ii) what is included in administering a writing program, and finally (iii) what are the professional and disciplinary responsibilities of a WPA? The last question authorizes the WPA to speak for a discipline; it foreshadows an authority that can not only speak about a writing program but a program of writing, and the statements that the WPA has published in the last two decades reaffirm this authority. An unstated social contract emerged from this
history of protest, but more importantly, that social contract hinges on another more covert contract, one that extends beyond 20th century academic politicking and relies on the property lines of print literacy.

**Print’s Social Contract**

“The invention of printing did away with anonymity, fostering ideas of literary fame and the habit of considering intellectual effort as private property. Mechanical multiples of the same text created a public – a reading public. The rising consumer-oriented culture became concerned with labels of authenticity and protection against piracy and theft.” – Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage* (122).

Institutional authority often performs itself in collective and/or collaborative documents that are published by governmental and/or professional organizations, which means that much of institutional authority comes from consensus and rhetorical authority. Such authority can be pressured and questioned especially in times of crisis, whether those crises are real or imagined. One way to view a crisis is to see if it marks any change in an established social contract. The invention of the printing press accelerated the break between the Christian church and state in Western cultures, and consequentially it paved the way for the establishment of multiple presses that would not only change the ways Westerners organized the world but also the way they learned and communicated those organizations (Eisenstein 24). The importance of the print revolution is apparent in the political, cultural, and economic upheavals that followed, including what are popularly called the Scientific, Protestant and Industrial Revolutions. For the purposes of this chapter, the invention of printing presents an apt gateway to the discussion of how plagiarism came to be defined as it is: an illegitimate use of source material and a corruption of the printed text.
Before the printing press authorship was in flux since imitation and collaboration were considered essential to the composing process, “The pre-modern writer did not need to cite his sources” (Moore Howard 5). The printing press made information available in a way that had previously been the authority of the church, in the form of textual productions. While the printing press is most commonly associated with the Renaissance, its effects (i.e. the widespread dissemination of ideas) have altered the course of intellectual history and those changes can be observed in the philosophies most closely associated with the Enlightenment.

As McLuhan points out in the above passage, the most poignant consequence of the press was the naming of anonymous. Anonymous has long been a placeholder for not one author, but a series of “authors” who invoke observations or insights that cannot be traced back to one source. Anonymous is very much a character in pre-literate cultures where intellectual heritage was a secondary concern to the themes and morals which were part and parcel of the product, whether they are narratives, images, or songs. The particularity of composition, i.e. the source of authorship, becomes important in a system where recording can also be construed as record-keeping. In his essay on “Imitation and the Object of Art” Ong presents the most cogent question, what makes something (in this case a piece of art) singular or particular? That question is the filtered subtext for many contemporary values of authenticity that are directly related to the rationalist and empiricist models derived from the period of Western Enlightenment; authenticity of the text is the unstated value of print’s social contract.

*What is a social contract?*
For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on two concepts of the social contract forwarded by Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Hobbes’s *Leviathan* marks the beginning of modern social contract theory, although one could argue that social contracts extend well beyond the 17th century to the first acts of writing and recording ownership. However, social contract theory, as introduced by Hobbes, claims that the consent to be governed arises out of humanity’s basic primitive desires, which are self-destructive if left unchecked and unregulated. Hobbes’s “social contract” focuses on how the act of mutual consent and rule making will act as a regulation, a check, on those base instincts and ensure the optimum survival of many rather than the few, even if that consent goes to a king.

Where Hobbes focused on the individual’s right to yield his power to the greater good, Rousseau examined social contracts as viable ways to govern, and as the political pact for nation and state building. Social contracts require terms of agreement, basic points from which participants can begin to establish pacts, protection barriers. Rousseau delineates the terms down to this observation, “the total alienation of each associate together will all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all” (391). The social contract, for Rousseau, requires the sacrifice of one’s rights to the community’s rights. Both definitions presume several fundamental beliefs about human capability and agency: (i) that humans have a state of natural agency with which they can choose, (ii) that humans are endowed with natural rights which they can use as negotiation to agree to governance, and (iii) that humans can relinquish their natural rights in favor of a common good. So social contracts are implicit contracts by agents that consolidate into
an authorized agency that can act, which becomes a collected voice. The social contract presumes selves are independent bodies that can enter agreements, that acknowledge property and other boundary lines which enclose and restrict, enacting in body what the social contract idealizes in spirit – that one can offer something intangible to another in an exchange for something tangible; it presumes a system of property, whether real or imaginary or in our case, intellectual; this notion of property underscores the governance of contracts.

**Writing's Social Contract**

So what are the terms of the social contract of print and how do these terms influence an organization such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators? First, the social contract tradition can frame how an organization like the WPA could acquire authority but it can also identify how that authority relies on factors beyond what is traditional academic authority in the form of scholarship or reputation, such as cultural expectations set up by print and the need to protect what has become tangible property rights. Also, the metaphor of a social contract works well in trying to understand the organization of how print culture diverges from the metaphor of digital literacy, that of networking. Here we should return to the consent v. agreement model of the social contract. In print authorship, the scholarship has revealed an anxiety about what had previously been consented to as authorship. Ownership depends on property lines, intellectual property lines that have dissolved in the digital age. Couple this dissolution with epistemological questions and doubts about the singularity of the self, and you get an anxiety that explains the near catastrophic panic that seems to accompany plagiarism.
Writing studies has been forced to confront this anxiety, among others, not only theoretically, but daily in its pedagogy. One signal of the changing social contract, I argue, is the perception that plagiarism is increasing. Plagiarism is a condition of print authorship since citation is an embedded protocol of modern print scholarship. The importance placed on sourcing material is not an entirely “enlightened” idea, but the process of socializing man to citation and attribution reveals how plagiarism may invoke emotive and reactive responses from scholars and writers. As Rebecca Moore Howard notes, “Plagiarism is barred from cultural discussion because it is incapable of bearing its cultural burden. To examine plagiarism and its role in society would be to acknowledge it as an unstable field incapable of bearing any burden at all” (2000). Howard’s insight, which not only pervades her work but also the work of most plagiarism studies in that last two decades, points to the transient nature of any discussion on plagiarism. Because the thing itself, plagiarism, cannot carry the weight of its meaning, the discussions surrounding plagiarism are always under threat of collapse as well. Scholarship and general cultural intuition both reveal that plagiarism marks much more than amateur copying or malicious laziness.

The modern academy’s notions of knowledge sharing rest on the views that knowledge is property that can be owned. The model set forth by secularism divorces notions of divinity from epistemology in the sense that human selves can be responsible to and for knowledge production. Can we view plagiarism through a similar lens that Foucault uses when he examines the “reformation” of the prison as the fundamental potentiality that is part of “formation” of such systems? (Foucault 234) Is plagiarism fundamental to authorship? Is the potential for plagiarism necessary to the formation of
authorship? Plagiarism becomes an imagined conflict; it is a conflict of the imagination. The value of imagination in an academic context is restrained by the necessity of citation and deduction. One cannot wholesale create knowledge but at the same time, one must be held accountable to the level of creativity one employs in the communication of knowledge. The contradictory motions between creativity and derivation stand at the heart of the academic and cultural struggles with plagiarism.

Print literacy has specific parameters for writing which emerge from the technologies of copying and archiving, and this contract has defined writing as authorship and ownership. Laws and institutions have been created to guard these terms and protect them from infringing interests. In her 2007 article Alina Ng argues that:

If the aim of the copyright system is to encourage authentic authorship that is independent of patronage by the commercial market, a shift in copyright ethics must occur to grant rights and entitlements as a fundamental and natural right of the author and to impose simultaneous moral obligations on authors to make their works available to society in accordance with the social agreement an author has with other members of society. (426)

Ng’s observation here helps to contextualize how print literacy has been institutionalized through the apparatus of copyright protection. The scholarship about intellectual property and copyright often intersects with discussions about plagiarism in the literature, but because plagiarism is not legally prosecutable, the conversations end up paralleling each other rather than affecting each other. However, there is a lesson to be
learned from the copyright conversation, especially about the limits of authorship as
digital writing technologies threaten to ignore the boundaries put in place by both
cultural mores and legislative actions. What happens when the terms of the social
contract change, and furthermore, what happens when they change at a rapid pace?

What are the terms of print authorship? Foucault in “What is an Author?” remarks
that the author’s name ‘sets off a discursive’ space and acts as a classification as well
as what he calls the “author function,” which acts as a way of historicizing texts and
enclosing certain themes/motifs/discourses. If we were to parse out and list the features
of print authorship, we would have to look to the characteristics of not only invention but
commodity. What can be called one’s own. An author can claim a text when he/she has
‘created’ the story, has signed his/her name to the text, and has publicized the text.
Legal protections such as copyright delineate the property ownership lines of
authorship.

Copyright, which has its own controversial histories, can be traced back to
Queen Anne’s reign and copyright was initiated not so much for artistic integrity but for
economic necessity. Publishers invoke copyright more often than single authors. A
modern example of such contention comes from online publication and the continuing
efforts of corporations to curtail online peer sharing softwares that threaten to extinguish
publishing of multiple editions. So it should come as no surprise that the plagiarism
 crisis, which it has been often described as, pressures the limits of textual authority.
When a crime spree occurs, for example, the first institution to come under scrutiny is
the policing mechanism; writing instructors are often tasked with policing the rules of
composition. Policing writing practices and rules are intricately woven into the social
contract of the WPA, even if its best practices statements try to evade such responsibility, and Howard even warns against this paradigm shift from student/teacher to police/criminal (47). However, Howard’s warning can have less impact as we move from singular classroom practice to administrative policies and procedures. Administrators must balance the desires of its own discipline with the desires of those outside the discipline, so plagiarism presents a protracted problem of ethics that encompass more than pedagogical practice.

**When “We” Meets “Them”**

The problem of plagiarism is another in a laundry list of challenges faced by contemporary writing program administrators. Although the last few years of scholarship from WPAs have focused on assessment and remediation, the continuing perception that plagiarism is epidemic or out of control pressures the job of writing faculty and administrators. Additionally, the issue of plagiarism intersects with the challenges of assessment, as WPAs try to construct assessment mechanisms to measure and evaluate student literacy practices. The WPA’s authority over writing and the rules of writing in many ways reinforces this pressure. So the question becomes: how did the WPA become endowed with this authority?

Because plagiarism strikes at the heart of the social contract of print literacy, an institutional approach to the subject is always under pressure from its own history. The stress and anxiety surrounding plagiarism not only exposes the weakening power of print authorship but simultaneously infringes on the authority of the WPA as an authority, highlighting how a professional organization can be co-opted by its own history and debilitated by the power of precedent. Additionally, the rapidly changing technologies of composition challenge once prescribed sites and tools of writing such as
the page and the pen. All of these issues converge in a way that uses once accepted notions of authorship to confront once accepted notions of authority, which directly challenges the social contract of print culture.

It scrutinizes three selected texts from the last twenty years of scholarship on plagiarism in order to disclose a particular historical narrative of discontent and disorder, a narrative that outlines writing studies’ struggle against a changing world of authorship while still maintaining boundaries of academic integrity – a narrative that the discipline does not know it is enacting. These writings surround the organizational document that is at the heart of this discussion: the WPA’s “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices.”

If we read plagiarism as an administrative issue, we can see that the anxieties it provokes are similar to anxieties about other administrative concerns including student retention, undergraduate research, the place of liberal arts and general education, and the requirement for assessment protocols. On any given news day a reader can find an article that sounds the alarm of crisis in higher education. In fact, a quick review of the last ten years of literature about higher education will reveal a panic narrative, a story that predicts the end of higher education as we know it. In recent years the crisis narrative has broadly covered three key areas: student retention/graduation rates, the place of liberal arts/general education, and the debates about competitions between for-profit, public, and private institutions of higher education. These debates have intensified since the 2001 Kellogg Commission Report, Returning to Our Roots, which offered various pieces of advice to public and land-grant institutions including the preservation of tenure, the alignment of athletics with academics, and the importance of
a value-driven educational environment. The report, unfortunately, dated itself as soon as it tied the future of higher education to values instead of values and skills.

This chapter takes a skeptical view of the WPA’s authority and analyzes its statement on best practices for rhetorical signs of discontent. The statement performs a convergence of sorts, representing the perplexed nature of plagiarism, especially in the writing classroom. As a professional organization’s “authorized” statement, the WPA advice demonstrates the often non-pragmatic consequence when feminist and postmodern theories of authorship collide with practical and administrative procedures. The WPA’s statement constitutes a kind of social contract for the discipline, a contract that reveals how writing studies cannot define plagiarism in ways that are procedural, and therefore avoidable, because writing studies still depends on, and is therefore abject before, the ideal of print authorship and its dark twin, plagiarism. Ironically, the WPA’s Statement on Best Practices surfaces from a “process” tradition, yet it opposes creating clearly defined procedures for avoiding plagiarism. The WPA’s resistance to prosecuting plagiarism represents the discipline’s reluctance to enforce pragmatic and consistent rules of order, a reluctance that makes explicit the insidious affection writing studies has for plagiarism.

Affection, here, accords with how Hebb described emotion as response to the blockage of a “cued” behavior (1949). Hebb’s work delves into the organization of behaviors to understand organizational behavior. Affection, then, becomes a placeholder for how entities within an organization respond to behaviors, both expected and unexpected. For professional organizations, such responses to “cued” behaviors are delineated by the principles of credentialing and community, a voluntary social
contract that separates professional expectations of behavior from the vulgar masses (Brint 7). In academic professions, the credentialing process appears in the “voluntary” system of peer review, which standardizes professional standards of performance but also codifies basic principles and values (generally in the form of defining terms) for professions and its members. Thus, the metaphor of a social contract works well in trying to understand the organization of how print culture diverges from the metaphor of networking that is involved in digital culture. I argue that organizational practice is clarified and codified by professional organizational documents, such as statements of conducts, codes of ethics, and other “co-signed” mandates or social contracts, a system of examining the “we” that can more fully address the pressured disconnect between the perceived “crisis” of plagiarism and the world of textual production from which students emerge.

The affection writing studies and writing instruction (as delivered by instructors) has for plagiarism is much like that in a bad marriage, one where the partnership is co-dependent and unhealthy but too exciting and contentious to give up. We both hate and yes, love, plagiarism as writing teachers. If students didn’t plagiarize, then how and where would the notions of authorship, ownership, and collaboration be more acutely aligned? While the scholarship of plagiarism is vast, there are certain questions or anxieties around which the conversations tend to gravitate. If we view the scholarship as a narrative, then we can see the general arc of the plagiarism story has addressed three sets of concerns. Although a crude configuration, the three areas are: pedagogy, theories of authorship, and digital literacies. All of these areas could be seen as one, for they address epistemological concerns that move our understanding of textual
production from one informed by Enlightenment and Romantic era ideals of authorship to understanding authorship not as a consequence of technology but rather as extension of the available technologies. The scholarship, then, has established particular guidelines and behaviors for addressing plagiarism, behaviors that I argue are emotive rather than the seeming objective. This false objectivity is a screen hide behind which the field hides, a screen that appears in the form of the “authorized” definition and best practices advocated by the Writing Program Administration.

The Authority of the WPA

The place of the plagiarism debate is very much a part of the writing program administrator’s area of expertise. Often plagiarism cases are brought before a variety of university administrators, including those considered the experts in writing. In the case of composition studies, and its more recent iteration writing studies, the institutionalized seat of authority has often shifted between three bodies: the Modern Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Writing Program Administration, the latter of which high profile participants such as Chris Anson, Ed White, Susan McLeod, and others have increased the WPA’s stature as a professional authority. The WPA also establishes authority with a systemized review process of writing programs as well as documents that advise universities on what to expect in First Year Composition courses, critique the scholarship opportunities and standards of Writing Program Administrators, and offer a “best practices” statement on how to deal with plagiarism.

This chapter does not completely question the WPA’s position as a professional organization nor its authority as such, but it does place under scrutiny the value and relevance of its professional standards regarding plagiarism. As the professional
representation of a large social class, writing faculty and administrators, the WPA is not
only a guardian of traditions but an augur of professional standards, especially when the
profession is faced with political pressures, cross-disciplinary demands, and rapidly
changing technologies that constantly alter the skills and abilities of the students its
members teach.

But the WPA’s official statement does not stand in isolation. The document
emerges from a long conversation about the increasing cases of plagiarism as well as
the scholarship that emerged in the early 1990s. The WPA's statement was published in
January 2003, and to a large extent, remains the profession’s one source of authority
(yes, ironic).

To contextualize the WPA Statement, I’ve chosen three articles to juxtapose
against it. First I will examine Susan McLeod’s “Responding to Plagiarism: The Role of
the WPA,” which was published in the WPA Journal in 1992, a year that Rebecca
Moore Howard observes as a “year of change” with regards to the scholarship on
plagiarism. Second, I will present Amy Martin’s 2005 qualitative research article that
advocates for adding more definitive and encompassing concepts of collaboration in the
WPA Best Practices Statement. And finally, I will look to Rebecca Moore Howard’s and
Missy Watson’s 2010 WPA article that reviews the state of scholarship on plagiarism
and their joint call for further research in specific areas and with specific methods.

After this textual examination, I will call upon organizational theories, specifically
Rawls’s “Archimedean Point” of social contract theory as a way to revise the
profession’s definition of plagiarism, but more importantly, its codes for best practices.
Rawls’s theory, when applied to the changing hands of authorship, from a print based to
digital based culture allows the profession room to compromise without relinquishing
tonons of academic integrity. Social contracts are the theoretical co-signatories
underwriting professional organizational authority, so it seems fitting that we appeal to
them when change is not only needed, but needed in order to survive.

The Literature

A. “The Scholarship of Plagiarism: Where We’ve Been, Where We are, And What’s Next.” WPA Journal 33:3, Spring 2010.

I will not start with the beginning in this section, but rather I will start with the end. Of all the authorized voices who write, think, and speak about plagiarism, Rebecca Moore Howard rises above them as the person to whom many of us turn for guidance and expertise about plagiarism. I invoke her collaborative article with Missy Watson here as an entry point into examining the WPA’s traditional response to plagiarism. Howard dominates the first and second generation stories of plagiarism, and in her position as authority, she has taken care to monitor and engage the unfolding lines of inquiry that plagiarism has inspired in the last twenty years. In 2010, she and Missy Watson offered seven recently published texts as an opportunity to view the work that has been done so
far on plagiarism. Their article had an additional goal, which was to predict the lines of inquiry that would be most productive for scholars and pedagogues alike.

To this end, their article categorizes the types of scholarship that has most recently been published in the field of plagiarism studies (as Kerry called it in 2008), noting the varied methodologies and goals of each text such as the interdisciplinarity of Haviland and Mullin’s 2008 *Who Owns This Text? Plagiarism, Authorship, and Disciplinary Cultures* and the advisory and didactic goals of DeSena’s 2007 *Preventing Plagiarism* and Gilmore’s 2008 *Plagiarism: Why It Happens, How to Prevent It*. Howard and Watson use this literature review to set up a call to arms for a second generation, or perhaps more aptly a third generation, of inquiry that more narrowly targets institutional and disciplinary concerns about plagiarism prevention and pedagogy (122). For Howard and Watson, the work that needs to be done will happen in the social and social science turn toward data gathering and qualitative research.

I would add to their argument here, though, and advocate for a return to administrative theories of plagiarism. While the social science turn does much to organize and actualize the “problems of plagiarism,” the data is still being fed into a system of assumptions about incoming student writers into the university and furthermore, and more importantly to my mind, the assumptions that faculty have about what they teach, how they teach, and to whom they are teaching. Those assumptions are most apparent in the professional organization’s document, the WPA’s January 2003 “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices.” While the authors conclude with a list of questions that plagiarism scholarship has yet to fully
address, the major argument reveals the interest about the scholarship has yet to wane, which allows us to ask what about plagiarism requires so much discussion? But before we get to the WPA Statement, it is important to note that a decade of rigorous scholarship connects the WPA’s official definition of plagiarism and the initial wave of disciplinary concern about plagiarism. As stated earlier, Howard and Watson argue that 1992 is the year when composition scholars begin to scrutinize the perception of an increase in plagiarism.

In 1992 Susan McLeod published “Responding to Plagiarism: The Role of the WPA.” McLeod’s article is notable for three reasons. First, she bases her rhetorical frame on legal definitions of plagiarism and pedagogical anecdotes, which reveals the type of concern that writing faculty and administrators have about plagiarism and plagiarists. The predominant analogy McLeod employs comes from legal scholarship. She even notes that “A breach in academic integrity guidelines can be a legal issue; to protect the writing program from accusations of unequal treatment (and perhaps from resulting lawsuits), cases of plagiarism in writing classes should be handled not by individual teachers but by a WPA who knows the procedures to follow and who can work closely with the campus legal advisors, if necessary” (7). The fear of litigation, which in this article borders on paranoia\(^1\), is conflated with academic integrity, but this fear also prioritizes administrative responses over pedagogical imperatives, already undermining the authority of the professional member in favor of granting such authority

\(^1\) McLeod’s frame of using “legal” ramifications of plagiarism proves to be a specific fear in the study of plagiarism. The cases of plagiarism lawsuits, while popular in the publishing world such as with Grisham, Rowling, etc., the instances of academic cases of plagiarism lawsuits are few and far between. Even the cases of professional academics charged with plagiarism over the last decade ended in termination rather than litigation.
to the professional organization, in this case, the WPA. Such conflations could explain, in some part, the discipline’s affection for plagiarism. It’s a negative affection, one filled with fear.

In retrospect, McLeod’s concern may seem reactionary, given the prevalence of literature since 1992 that represents plagiarism as an ongoing crisis that pervades academic and professional writing, and the very few instances of legal prosecution or litigation that has taken place. McLeod considers the WPA’s role in plagiarism cases, but also reviews the epistemological and pedagogical constraints and contradictions inherent in teaching writing while teaching against plagiaristic practices. For example, McLeod points to a problem in teaching about plagiarism that becomes a subset of literature in the scholarship: teaching international students, especially those from Asia and Eastern Europe where ideas of citation and documentation are drastically different. This contradiction becomes a central component of the scholarship on plagiarism, at least among professional writing faculty.

For example, if we review the literature of Rebecca Moore Howard, the leading scholar on plagiarism, much of her work from the early 1990s through the mid-2000s concerns the conflicting missions of writing pedagogy with administrative and pedagogical practice. Her “patchwriting” concept emerges from her own experiences in the classroom (Standing in the Shadow of Giants) and her interest in the histories of authorship, which demonstrate the transient and mutable definitions of what it means to practice authorship. Howard, as well as McLeod, also admits to the importance of anecdote as a way of telling the stories of plagiarism, a practice that itself is rife with discontent, discord, and disorder. Whenever one tells the story of a classroom
experience we are on guard against the emotions that may still linger and augment the telling.

McLeod’s article falls into this trap of anecdote as well. While she offers advice to the profession on defining plagiarism and fellow writing faculty on how to understand and approach instances of plagiarism, she concludes her article with what will become a classic technique for scholars, and that is the resistance to cynicism. As most stories of plagiarism begin, the plagiarist (often a student) is caught with language – the essay that starts out mediocre and somewhere in the middle soars to sophisticated heights – an instance that many teachers of writing recognize as a moment of suspicion. McLeod advises against this automatic reaction, reminding colleagues that sometimes students do dramatically improve, that writing skills can excel when students are engaged.

However, I would resist McLeod’s move here, a move that is traditional in much of the pedagogical literature about plagiarism. This narrative move, while hopeful and optimistic, belies the danger of anecdotal expeditions of plagiarism – that danger is the attempt to psychologize plagiaristic practices, which I argue nurtures the affection between writing studies and plagiarism. The need to understand, which sometimes leads to excusing, student plagiarism does little to prevent it, as evidenced by the over twenty years of intense scholarship. Nor does understanding why students plagiarize contribute to an ethical code of conduct, since such preoccupations move plagiarism further away from a set of procedural rules and indulge the myth of the student-teacher relationship as one that can “save” students, rather than guide them. McLeod’s rhetorical choice to conclude her examination of a WPA’s role with a classroom anecdote also reiterates the pattern of conflating anecdote with critique that
occurs over the intervening years between her initial response and the WPA’s statement.

In January 2003 the WPA posted its most updated official statement on plagiarism, one that advises administrators and faculty on “best practices.” Indeed, the WPA’s statement appears after a decade-long conversation that was in large part spearheaded by Rebecca Moore Howard. While in McLeod’s article the fear of plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism take center stage, the WPA seemingly tries to present plagiarism as a particular act. It places an incredible amount of importance on defining plagiarism, which makes sense given the tenor of the conversations between 1992 and 2003. As stated earlier, the first “generation” of literature focuses heavily on the transient definitions of plagiarism. But the statement extends beyond simple definition; it makes an argument that places pedagogy and ethics in the flagship position.

The WPA splits the statement into four major sections: definition, reasons for plagiarism, what it calls “shared responsibilities,” and finally “best practices.” I will examine each section in the following few paragraphs, stopping to note the language and assertions that expose inherent contradictions between the goal of the statement, “best practices,” and the values and assumptions that the statement relies on to offer such advice.

In its short introduction to the statement, the WPA notes that the document is “intended to provide helpful suggestions and clarifications so that instructors, administrators, and students can work together more effectively in support of excellence in teaching and learning” (WPA, January 2003). This sentence clarifies the “intended”
audience for the statement, which includes students. Such an assertion of “shareholders” or “stakeholders” nominalizes the parties in the social contract, whom we will see later on do not all fully endorse the terms of agreement.

The WPA defines plagiarism with “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately [emphasis added] uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) [emphasis added] material without acknowledging its source” (WPA, January 2003). I’ve highlighted two phrases in this statement as a jumping off point for discussing the problems with defining plagiarism in such a way. First, when any statement uses “deliberately,” it invites the discussion of intention, which is an untenable accusation to prove. Deliberately also invokes the legal jargon that McLeod signaled in her 1992 article. The paranoia about the legal ramifications of plagiarism undergirds the affection that writing studies experiences for plagiarism. The statement reveals the discipline’s fear not of plagiarism, but of the possible consequences, which are represented as legalistic rather than epistemological. Second, the emphasis on “common knowledge” complicates the definition even more. While a traditional “concept” in defining plagiarism, the emerging digital landscape, with its rapidly changing technologies that depend on reiteration, almost eliminates the possibility of non-common knowledge, for the archive has become accessible and repeatable, with citation – take for example the “retweet” function on Twitter, the “reblog” function on tumblr, and the “share” button on Facebook.

The WPA further problematizes its definition by stating that “Internet and easy access to almost limitless written material on every conceivable topic” explains the “suspicion” of plagiarism amongst teachers of writing. This statement gives an
inordinate amount of power and influence to a technology, which conflates responsibility for teaching ethical research methods with teaching against a technology, playing into the print based bias that plagiarism depends on to survive. This assertion also repeats, in different language, the contrary assertion of its definition, that original knowledge is not common knowledge. The statement further enfolds “ethics” into its definition, demonstrating an almost pastiche like approach to defining plagiarism, from one of deliberation to the definition of “non-plagiarism” which demonstrates a student may well cite “clumsily” but who has made “every effort to acknowledge sources fully and appropriately” is not a plagiarist. One must ask: what is the difference between deliberate action and making every effort?

The second section of the WPA Statement deals with the causes and failures of documentation. As stated earlier, the interest in psychologizing student behavior contributes to the augmented affect surrounding plagiarism. An attempt to understand student behavior is a noble endeavor, but it can also complicate an already bloated bureaucratic process. Listing exceptions, or to co-opt from the field of legal studies, listing precedents that are “not” plagiarism invites the struggle over its definition, and I would argue further performs the co-dependency that writing faculty and administrators experience toward plagiarism. The fear of prosecution, the sentimentality for the naïve student, and the nostalgia for technologies that hid plagiaristic practices feed the discipline’s, perhaps even Western culture’s, anxiety about other forms of authorship. Robillard makes the most succinct observation about plagiarism to date; it is a form of authoring that “we” happen to punish rather than praise (12).
In her response to the WPA Statement on Plagiarism, Martin argues that the statement is deficient in addressing an important component of plagiarism studies, that of interdisciplinarity. The lack of such an address point to the ineffectiveness of trying to establish a generalizable statement on plagiarism, especially as professional standards, ethics, and practices change as technologies change. Martin’s critique provides another perspective on the limited authority of the WPA; if such authority is based on expertise and “past acts” then how does the WPA statement assure its non-writing studies audience of this authority? The social contract, in this case, has not been fully explicated.

Amy Martin’s critique of the WPA statement focuses on the lack of guidance to teachers of writing across the curriculum. Her charge, which would include lengthening the statement, asks the WPA to “guide WPAs, our students, and our colleagues across disciplines about the boundaries of acceptable person-to-person collaboration” (65).

While Martin’s criticism underlines the limits of what a statement of best practices can show, it also reinforces the need for the WPA to review its own extent of expertise when it comes to plagiarism. Martin’s study along with Roig’s previous studies show that the expectations of text interaction, as Martin calls many of the research scenarios she used hypothetically in her study, vary greatly depending on the discipline.

**Conclusion**

Every property has a story. Land, especially, often holds the story of generations of family, so too the stories of factories and towns, cities and neighborhoods. The narrative of property, at least in modern political discourse finds its roots in John Locke (Rose 1990). But what do we do with the stories of the non-tangible properties, the ones that exist in text and other spaces that are not so easily delineated by maps and graphs,
by zones and codes? And if property has its story then so must theft. For “intellectual properties,” the story of theft is told through the narratives of plagiarism. As I reviewed the literature surrounding plagiarism, which itself has enough study to constitute its own subgenre of scholarship, if not its own discipline, I realized that much of the narrative about plagiarism was just that, narrative.

The field of plagiarism studies is filled with two types of “stories,” those told as anecdotes, narratives of experiences of students and faculty that try to explain the complicated affective nature of being accused or having to accuse another of plagiarism. The second type of story is a statistical story, a turn that writing studies has taken in general, toward social science models of education that track data sets of information, hoping to extract and explain patterns of student writing, in particular. This statistical story hides the affect, in many ways, behind institutional authority. By seeing authority through the frame of the social contract, the “we” in which “we” speak may be able to see how such authority is constructed not only by the Emersonian past act but also by the past acts of others, of institutions, of, in fact, technologies that are as ephemeral as authority itself.
CHAPTER 5
THE BARBARIC TRICKSTER: PLAGIARISM AND THE APOCALYPSE OF AUTHORITY

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

**Introduction**

On the one hand, sepulchres are extravagant grave markers which are intended to preserve the dead as dead. Like all tombs, these grave markers visibly mark a space so that all those passing by know that a body resides in the tomb, but not just a body, a life, a face, a consciousness. But grave markers also visibly mark the presence of the possible ghost. Emerson’s critique is not that we remember the fathers, but rather our age carries the burdens of the fathers in the texts we write, in the sepulchres we build. In the honoring of the father, we give authority to this figure, and the grave marker acts in much the same way that a footnote works: Here lies the father. Here lies the source. Here lies the truth.

On the other hand, sepulchres denote the rituals that accompany death and the reliance upon those rituals. A sepulchre continues to be a sepulchre only when we first recognize it as such, and second, can reproduce it. The grave depends on memory to be memorial, and that system can only sustain itself when the monument builders continue to maintain and prize the value of the monument. And the monument is not always the grave but the place that has been identified as a public mourning and remembrance space. The value of the monument, of the sepulchres to the fathers, calls upon the sentiments of nostalgia. Histories, biographies, and the criticisms that preserve
these texts enact not only what Fred Davis sees as the connection between past and present but, moreover, the urge to keep the past in the present.

Emerson quite critically draws a connection between the nostalgia for the father and the textual products of print culture – histories, biographies. Nostalgia depends on the past; it’s the call of the infant for the missing parent, the call of an age for its missing past. Histories and biographies work to hide this dependence, to muffle this cry, but these texts create a system that continually monumentalizes the dead, thus creating an affective paradox that looks to the past as authority and embeds that past in the very structures and content it tries to deny. How?

Citation is the ritualistic marking that writing has taken upon itself to formalize the entombing of the dead letter. Citation systems, as Robert Connors notes, have histories that demonstrate how they mimic systems of “debt and ownership” and as these systems have become more formalized, citation also “valorizes” itself. The formalization of citation system authorizes the citation; citation systems mechanize and memorialize the multiple voices of a text; they create an efficient system of entombing, of gravemarking. Citation ratifies the collaborative history of a text and makes visible the dead ones who came before the text, who helped create the text. Like Emerson’s dead fathers and their sepulchres, citation systems publish subtle reminders of the dead throughout a text. Consequentially, erasing the citation then erases the dead, covers their markers, their graves.

Erasure becomes desecration.

This dissertation began with a discussion of nativity and savagery; it will end with tricksterism and desecration. The first line of Barbara Babcock-Abrahams’s article about
the trickster states, “No figure in literature, oral or written, baffles us as much as trickster” (147). I would “steal” her sentiment here and apply it to the plagiarist as well. No figure in writing tests us as much as the plagiarist. This chapter argues that these two figures, plagiarist and trickster, share many common traits, and as trickster occupies a marginal space in folklore, so too does plagiarist in composition. It is boundary dweller, grave robber, and bastard child come back to haunt the text.

The introductory chapter catalogued, to a limited degree, the conversations around plagiarism and other forms of outlier textual practices. In the succeeding chapter the fine line between what has been called “digital nativity” and what could be perceived as “digital savagery” emerged as a frame through which we could start to parse out the underlying anxiety about plagiarism. This savagery challenges institutionalized authority in subtle and not-so-subtle moves, including textual practices that have been often categorized as outside acceptable parameters of composition. The dissertation then shifted focus to one individual entity, the Council of Writing Program Administrators. This move was intentional since it allows the dissertation to spotlight one figure of authority in the field of writing studies, but even more specifically, a figure to which administrators appeal for both pedagogical and organizational advice. The final chapter in this exploration introduces the figure of the mythical trickster as a guide post for understanding the often de-authorized figure of the plagiarist.

The Necessity of Allegory

Several themes emerge from the literature of tricksterism that will help to frame a discussion of plagiarism. Terms such as transgression, invasion, fraud, deviance often are used to describe the trickster. These same terms can be applied to the plagiarist as well. One important theme that emerges across trickster cycles, though, is the figure’s
challenge of accepted authority. Hynes and Doty propose that trickster figures defy categorization but they endeavor to identify six characteristics that tricksters share: ambiguity, deception, ability to shape shift, inversion, imitation, and profane bricolage (34).

I argue that by using trickster scholarship writing studies can reframe the anxiety around plagiarism, specifically as a self-reflective exercise to see which presumptions about our “culture” and communitas may need to be revised in light of transformations in writing technologies and techniques. Trickster and plagiarist, and here I take the article “the” away from plagiarist, perform three functions that disrupt social norms.

The setting of contemporary studies of plagiarism is fairly straight-forward. Institutions, those endowed with both cultural and economic authority, struggle with the effects of plagiarism and have turned much of their rhetoric into an existential debate. The plagiarist has taken on mythic qualities. This chapter takes those mythic qualities at face value and poses the following line of inquiry. What if we were to view the plagiarist as a mythic figure such as the trickster? What could this view, partially askew, allow us to understand about plagiaristic acts and thus, could we use that new vision as way to reflect on current practices and definitions in service to revising them for clearer and more effective approaches to understanding and dealing with plagiarism? The chapter’s argument relies on three premises:

1. Plagiarism is an abstract concept that has been utilized as a concrete protection of institutional values, especially those that guard notions of self, creativity, authorship, and more importantly, ownership. Hence, the plagiarist threatens the threshold spaces.
2. As new digital technologies reveal the virtuality of writing and identity, these institutionalized values begin dematerializing and thus face extinction and seem like a trick of the hand. Plagiarism heralds an apocalypse of sorts.

3. This textual apocalypse demonizes the plagiarist as a reaper, a death bringer, but this figure can be reshaped as a trickster figure. Tricksters, as noted by scholars such as Levi-Strauss, Radin, Hyde, and others, both bear the apocalypse and set the boundaries for the new, post-apocalyptic age.

Plagiarism enacts an allegorical situation, which is difficult to approach and analyze because of the multi-layered and affective nature of the plagiarism problem. The allegory of plagiarism works to hide the anxiety over textual authorship and ownership; plagiarism symbolizes a tug of war between the singular and inventive “author” of the printed age and the anonymous, collaborative, multi-vocal, and automotive “texter” of the digital age. McLuhan observes that automation ushers in a system that mimics the body’s central nervous system, that automation is a mechanico-organic system which “brings in real 'mass production,' not in terms of size, but of an instant inclusive embrace” (349). Automation provides a simple analogy, a bridge, between the impressive figure of the single Author-God (Barthes) that creates worlds with words and the distributive figure of the digital anonymous relayer that finds, gathers, and absconds with words and ideas.

These premises draw from several disciplines including history, literary theory, and organizational management. The academy, specifically, in the wake of the Enlightenment and through the industrialized age, slowly shifted toward standardized authority and away from traditional, non-standardized frames of classical liberal arts.
This shift can be detected in the rituals used to document itself such as citation and certification. Documentation styles, for example, emerge in the late 19th and early 20th century congruent with the popularization of professional organizations. Professional organizations produce and protect the rules and procedures of documentation, hence they define how to source content and by extension, authenticate how valuable that content may or may not be.

As stated in the previous chapters, much of the rules of writing emerge not as natural boundaries, but as cultural agreements about citation, creativity, and composition. These social contracts rely on extensive and complicated systems, systems that are historically positioned and have evolved from specific rules of print culture. For Western culture, especially the United States and Europe, the effects of mass print are infinite – from the Queen Anne Copyright law to the flyers printed for the American Revolution to the mass production of entertainment.

Print, however, also requires archiving and access and vetting and all those mechanisms of authentication that establish what is “good” and “real” versus what is “fake” and “bad.” Citation, for example, certifies sources and allusions. Such certification processes may reveal a genealogy but also hide others from the genealogy. For every citation there is a plagiarism.

Professional organizations, in other words, stand in as actuaries of knowledge and knowledge collection and distribution. And as noted by Baudrillard, any system of collecting is in danger of being fetishized (Elsner and Cardinal, 7). The act of collection often hides a structure of desire and enacts an evacuation of the content; the collecting becomes the important act and becomes the exchange of value, often displacing the
objects of collection. Thus, it is not the traded item that holds worth but the trader, the brand, the institution. In accounting this value is calculated as goodwill in the appraisal of a business or company’s sale price.

The consequences of this system are three fold. Institutions become insulated and guard against vulnerability. Such institutional insulation can produce quasi-incestuous systems which weaken the institution and further, can create cultures that bind themselves to dogmatic rules and procedures that when challenged threaten the structural integrity of the whole. This self-sustaining and self-punishing approach often gets memorialized in institutional storytelling, branding, and manufacture self-myths. Thus a threatening figure can appear as an apocalyptic persona, as one who heralds the end of times. The plagiarist shares three key characteristics with the trickster figure: illegitimate, transgressive, and cataclysmic. The plagiarist is a stock figure, to a degree, in the story of print.

Western institutions of publishing, including the academy, have mythologized plagiarism as an imminent threat. The metaphors applied to plagiarism are countless but almost always involve the destruction of a system – illness, theft, plague, epidemic. The plagiarist, then, represents the threat but is also a vessel within which the threat resides. However, every threat can also be seen as an opportunity and in this case, I would argue that the plagiarist should be recalculated as a trickster that will enable the academy to reflect on its own dogmatic responses in the further goal of revising those responses to become more effective and more accurate representation of the knowledge bearing it wants students to employ in the world at large.

The problem of plagiarism requires an allegorical exploration. Here, allegory
serves three purposes. First, allegory, by its very nature, distances itself from realism. Characters, settings, and the tools of narrative are unambiguously metaphorical or metonymical in allegory; they stand in for something else and as such, the allegorical always inserts a space between itself as sign and what it seeks to signify. Since plagiarism has often been confused with other acts – theft, kidnapping, capture, and ennui, an allegorical examination of plagiarism inserts a critical distance between scholars and subject. Too often, in fact, plagiarism has been directly linked to other acts without a clear and concise account of that connection. How do we know this? A simple review of contemporary news stories about plagiarism, such as the German Defense Minister\(^2\) or the dean of the Medical School at the University of Alberta\(^3\), reveals the cultural acceptance of plagiarism as theft – a plagiarist steals rather than plagiarizes. The act of plagiarism consistently needs another referent act to give it meaning. Again, an allegorical examination, then, provides a discussion to examine that space.

Benjamin’s notion about the “ruin” of allegory and Frye’s notion of the “naïve allegory” frames this discussion of plagiarism. The effort is to divorce plagiarism from the often complicated and nonnegotiable spaces of pedagogy. This move also aligns with much of Rebecca Moore Howard’s efforts in *Standing in the Shadow of Giants* where her version of patchwriting emerges from a metaphoric and allegorical tradition of writing as weaving, hence the idea of patches. Patches are not discrete and yet they are.

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\(^2\) In March 2011, Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg resigned and his degree was rescinded due to the plagiarism found in his thesis. http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2056525,00.html

Situation plagiarism as allegory adheres to Benjamin’s observations about German tragic drama. In defining *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin argues that allegory “is not a playful illustrative technique, but a form of expression, just as speech is expressive, and, indeed, just as writing is.” 4 The problem of plagiarism, in other words, is a contemporary tragedy, one that has as its hero the deriver, the arranger. Text is the setting; history is the antagonist; the plagiarist is the villain. Additionally, an allegory is a traditional rhetorical and literary trope that follows a metaphor from the beginning to the end of a narrative arc, and the allegory works to both hide and reveal a theme through symbol and figure. Frye’s “naïve allegory” challenges the efficacy of the allegory, when employed insufficiently or elementarily by differentiating this type of allegory as dependent on mixed metaphor, which is a rudimentary employment of language. 5 The “naïve allegory” allows us to see the broken exchange in the rhetoric surrounding plagiarism. One of the anxiety producing issues in plagiarism is indeed a pedagogical problem; a disconnect occurs between student writer and professional writer/scholar. We can examine that disconnect as a mixture of metaphors, to a degree.

In addition to Benjamin and Frye, the examination also relies on McLuhan’s work in *Understanding Media* where he claims, “We live mythically but continue to think fragmentarily and on single planes” (25). McLuhan’s insight draws attention to the

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4 *Trauerspiel* is most commonly known as bourgeois tragedy. The genre and form is most closely connected to Benjamin’s text *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. On page 162, in the chapter entitled “Allegory and Trauerspiel” Benjamin unpacks how this type of tragedy can be used to see how modern allegory works, as both form and content, as opposed to the traditional definitions of allegory that saw content as prioritized.

5 In *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye identifies “naïve allegory” as a “disguised form of discursive writing” which is elementary and relies on “mixed metaphor.” I employ his definition here because plagiarism is itself a mixed metaphor, or more accurately, a mixture of metaphors.
allegorical dimension of textual production. To live mythically, a culture must endow its texts with meaning beyond explanation, instruction, or even persuasion. Texts can be sacred things. Plagiarism, which has been traditionally defined as the illicit appropriation of another’s intellectual property to use as one’s own, exposes an affective reality about textual production in the digital era. Such affect also extends out into popular culture.

**The Trickster Plagiarist**

Thomas Mallon wrote his popular history of plagiarism as a history of a crime or near crime. Thus, *Stolen Words* constitutes a history that thoroughly indicts plagiarism as a pseudo-criminal offense against the author and the reader, “Because ceasing to care about plagiarism would not mean that writers had experienced a rise in wisdom and generosity; it would mean that they had permitted themselves a loss of self-respect. And if egos stopped mattering, then, very likely would stop writing – or at least stop writing so frequently and well. Which means that, finally, plagiarism would be a crime against the reader” (237-38). Mallon’s analogy of crime fiction fits well in the history of the plagiarist as antagonist for the writer.

Recently, popular figures (both political and academic) have faced the charge of plagiarism, and such a charge garners front page attention. Plagiarism is shame for all involved. Amy Robillard began her work on the affective dimension of the plagiarism and teacher relationship in her 2007 article, “We Won’t Get Fooled Again: On the Absence of Angry Responses to Plagiarism in Composition Studies.” Robillard’s primary concern focuses on the writing teacher’s response to plagiarism, which Robillard sees as threatening the role of the teacher. Drawing mostly from Worsham’s work on emotion in composition work and Ahmed’s general study of emotion and culture, Robillard sets out a strong argument for the scholarship that still needs to be done on the role of affect
in the issue of plagiarism and to further examine what Robillard proposes, “...to begin the work of theorizing plagiarism as an affective issue, one that must be understood as social rather than individual” (19-20). Robillard’s call to arms is one that I hope to pick up on in this study. But rather than see the anger that generally accompanies plagiarism as simply anger, I would realign the focus on the affect that often underlies or hides behind the externally directed drive of anger: the internally directed experience of shame. Shame infuses the rhetoric surrounding plagiarism. The direct correlation between plagiarism and punishment makes the shame an explicit component in the experience. Shame is where the game is. So how does one highlight the shame but at the same time empty it of its force?

Language already does this, to a certain degree, and it does so with metaphor and analogy. Metaphor and analogy are the “is that is not.” One way to redirect the energy of an emotion is to suspend the connection between the experience and the actor; in other words, put the emotional trigger at one remove. I propose that, by using a figure from mythology and folklore: the trickster, the representations of which foreground the issue of shame in relation to those cultural and more broadly ideological defenses by which people protect themselves from having to acknowledge or feel the shame in question.

An allegorical investigation of plagiarism reveals how the confusion around the act of plagiarism and the figure of the plagiarist indicate a defensive, displaced, reactive, or otherwise sublimated affect, one which cannot fully articulate itself without an anxiety that is masked as indignation. How can we know this? Again, a simple review of both scholarly and popular mentions and examinations of plagiarism reveal a dependence on
the emotional response to plagiarism as its primary vehicle of communication. As the cases mentioned above reveal, the emotional response to plagiarism is apparent in the commentary left on various news stories that report cases of plagiarism. Accusations range from the epidemic of plagiarism signaling the end of the academy to plagiarism as exposing the hypocrisy of all scholarly study and the double standards that exist between professional writer and amateur student.

The often hyperbolic responses to plagiarism have even been cited as reasons for endeavoring to study plagiarism. Rebecca Moore Howard, whose decade long study of plagiarism counts as one of the most influential in current scholarship, began her initial book length work *Standing in the Shadows of Giants* with an anecdote about her own confused anger and ambivalence about student plagiarism. The emotional response, then, opens the way for us to provide a critical lens for that affect in the form of allegory and can provide a new approach to the scholarship that has focused on the problem by making the rhetoric of “the problem” its focus. Allegory calls upon us to study not the content of a story but the figures we use to tell a story and how their existence signal hidden meanings that we have yet to discover or uncover because to do so would be to recognize and feel what we do not want to acknowledge, what we cannot afford to acknowledge, what would be dangerous to acknowledge.

**The Boundary Dweller**

The trickster figure, then, accesses an allegory for this dissertation. As a boundary occupier, the trickster appears in myth as a disrupter of the status quo. The

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6 Howard’s work introduced the notion of patchwriting, which has become an accepted term in the study of plagiarism – patchwriting, in effect, is failed summary or paraphrase. Her efforts to examine plagiarism has framed the last decade of scholarship surrounding plagiarism and the teaching of writing.
trickster, as we will see, challenges presupposed authority and brings the near apocalypse to bear on its mythic community. It does so by seizing threshold spaces and residing in the boundaries and making those boundaries apparent to those who have ignored or hidden them. These threshold spaces can be geographic, genealogical, or even metaphysical. The trickster makes explicit the liminal. The trickster also plays tricks in this space. The trick can be making whole the fragments in bricolage or pastiche or even cheat the system already in play.

The threshold space, which encompasses Hynes and Doty’s concept of ambiguity is often referred to in one line of trickster scholarship as liminality. Victor Turner examines the concept of liminality in his anthropological work, most notably in his 1969 text *The ritual process: Structure and antistructure*. Turner posits that liminal spaces are the “betwixt-between” which trickster figures often inhabit. Liminality, then, is a non-boundary boundary and such a blurred space makes explicit the operating rules of a community, the laws that seem absolute become transient instead of intransient. One must know the house rules before entering, and in the liminal space, the exit and entrance are combined so that it’s not entirely possible to delineate if one is coming or going. Homi Bhabha argues that such liminal spaces denote hybridity, and that hybridity emerges in moments of identification. A postcolonial reading of liminality can further enunciate the anxiety that figures such as trickster and plagiarist evoke when encountered.

Often a trickster will push on prescribed laws by residing in the threshold space. In many Native American trickster cycles, the figure is contrary as both destroyer and creator, which acts in opposition to all the things known about that space. Thresholds
are entrances or exits, not places of residence or creativity, but as Ellis notes, “Trickster creates through destruction and succeeds through failure; his mythic and cultural achievements are seldom intentional” (56). The trickster, then, employs the liminal space, the place that exists outside the normal house rules to bring news to the culture in question and it often does that through irrational behavior (Ellis 47). Whether we adopt the mythic approach of community, the political approach of nationality, or the pedagogical approach of classroom, the sanctioned areas of a culture reside what is perceived as across the threshold space – one seeks refuge in, not between. One seeks sanctuary from, not betwixt. Yet, it is that threshold where change or the opportunity for change is most startling and sudden. And often the trickster appears as an imposter at the door or the bastard son returned home to the gods. As Radin notes in his study of tricksters, these figures often appear as destroyers but who are not easily named as part of a family – they are bastard children come back to confront the illicit acts of the parents with their own illegitimacy. The power of the illegitimate trope strikes at the heart of cultural systems of inheritance and rights to property. If my son is not my son how can he carry my name?

Reading the plagiarist as a bastard figure makes sense in a technological world where the emerging (and dominating) forms of production rely more heavily on remaking, remixing, rebooting, and reconfiguring. These modes are recreational and recreating. The visual arts, unlike writing, have negotiated remix/remake with the concepts of pastiche and montage. Ingelborg Hoesterey argues that pastiche reveals the importance of singular systems that can self-regulate, but which in turn, can connect
to other systems through these pastiche or patchwork gestures (105). These gestures replace or enhance the hailing that occurs.

The liminal space of the trickster also emphasizes its relationship to the otherworld and its power often bridges the space between. The otherworld is an inarticulate place in many mythic cycles, known only through metaphor and story; however, the trickster, often through accident and clumsiness, reveals the otherworld and can give the community a glimpse of it and that glimpse is often fragmented. Carl Jung posits that “civilized societies” have lost the meaning of trickster cycles:

The so-called civilized man has forgotten the trickster. He remembers him only figuratively and metaphorically, when, irritated by his own ineptitude, he speaks of fate playing tricks on him or of things being bewitched. He never suspects that his own hidden and apparently harmless shadow has qualities whose dangerousness exceeds his wildest dreams. (206)

For Jung the trickster is a shadow figure, a basic tenet in his archetypal psychology model, but for the purposes of this study, his approach reiterates the often inarticulated response readers have to such figures. Trickster invokes, to a certain degree, the unspeakable.

Liminality also marks boundaries and margins. Babcock-Abrahams uses Park and Stonequist’s concept of the “Marginal Man” to study the trickster as a deviant form or figure who reveals the “multivocal or polyvarent” of marginality (150). She further notes, “Marginality is, therefore, universal in that it is the defining condition as well as the by-product of all ordered systems” (152). Her scholarship, especially the conditions of marginality, grant us an avenue to thinking about how marginal figures such as
trickster, and in our case plagiarist, inhabit margins and thresholds and invoke, at the moment of their appearance, the multivocality of texts and communities, voices that are often hidden in linear genealogies that mask bastardizations or even, as Bhabha sees, reside in uncolonizable spaces.

One of the most potent themes of the trickster figure is the game. The trickster often is humorous or buffoon-like (Carroll, 1984). The trickster plays games with its heroes and gods, often dangerous games that can lead to death and apocalypse. The game, whether it be stealing the meat from the table or ending the world on a whim, happens on a story level but also on a language level. Lewis Hyde’s *Trickster Makes this World* lays out a multi-dimensional definition of the figure, making use of terms such as prophecy, desire, hunger, and rules, among others to examine how the character works in folklore and fiction, but more than that, how the trickster reveals hidden truths about the world. The trickster, according to Hyde, “is a boundary-crosser. . .[but] there are cases in which trickster creates a boundary, or brings to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight” (7). The idea of the “boundary-crosser” is not unique to Hyde’s text; Jung, Radin, Bloom, and other scholars have noted the trickster’s penchant for pushing and passing previously established social boundaries. This aspect of tricksterism probably contributes to the attraction of studying the character.

Boundaries often appear as operationalized rules and procedures; they emerge as laws, codes, or ceremonies. When a trickster appears as the foil to these rules, they reveal how the systems survive on exclusion not inclusion. What does this mean? Trickster exposes the boundaries as enclosures that operate at the expense of the ones
outside the wall; trickster shows up at the feast in order to bring news of the hungry and
starved.

The trickster, however, is not easily defeated because his appearance is tied
intimately to the theme of sustenance and survival. Radin found in his study of
Winnebago Trickster Cycles that the trickster reveals the values and fears of the
community; in Winnebago culture the trickster arrives in times of hunger, sometimes as
a figure of unknown parentage or origin, and as “the spirit of disorder. . .his function. . .is
to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed
bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted” (185). Hyde picks
up on Radin’s observations in his study, and as we start to see from both accounts, the
trickster’s destructiveness is necessary to complete the mythical and folkloric meta-
accounts of particular cultures. One must know what is being destroyed in order to
understand what has been created. And writing is a culture – it has guidelines and rules
for behavior that authorize and de-authorize it.

Paul Radin notes that “Trickster is at one and the same time creator and
destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself.
He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from
impulses over which he has no control. He knows neither good nor evil yet he is
responsible for both” (xxiii). Radin’s definition falls in line with Jung’s and later will be
used by Hyde as a component of his own reading of the trickster type in folklore.
Radin’s observation sets up an important frame that we can more thoroughly connect to
the plagiarist, a figure who is seen as duplicitous and impulsive but also as someone
who cheats the system.
Tricksters also fail to recognize the established order of things. They break the laws that others are expected to follow. However, many times their breaking of the law reveals the incongruities and injustices of those laws, laying bare for the world to see what has been accepted as right but perhaps, when exposed by the trickster, demonstrates the hypocrisy.

The metaphorical geography of the trickster can be seen in plagiarism when we consider how plagiarist is identified. Plagiarist comes into being as a negative, as a practitioner of non-practice. Freud, Jung, Levi-Strauss, Radin, and Hyde have all fleshed out (pun intended) the figure, but others have extended the definitions to include fictional rather than folkloric or mythological creatures. The tabula rasa potential of the trickster figure carries both advantages and disadvantages; there is a danger in evacuating the image of the trickster because it may defeat the power of the examination. If anyone can be a trickster, then who is not a trickster? However, taking all of the variations of tricksterism into account may allow contemporary composition studies to consider a trickster of its own, one that has become more prevalent in the last decade or so: the plagiarist. Both Radin’s and Hyde’s studies of the trickster serve well here, as I make the analogy between tricksterism and plagiarism. Availing the study of plagiarism to the study of myth allows readers to evacuate the emotion and allows them to step back from the story “they” are so often intimately connected to; myth affords a distance that perhaps can lend a critical lens to why plagiarism is a problem.

The plagiarist, in many ways, also fulfills such a function. Plagiarist appears most generally as a villain in an authorized writing culture, coming to light in the academy or in the publishing world. The idea of non-practice here occurs in the plagiarist’s erasure
of citation. The issue of intent is a controversial component of plagiarism's definition. Because the act is almost automatically defined as subject to punishment, the discussion of intent is corrupted. We can see a parallel in plagiarism. For example, the most common form of plagiarism is the erasing of citation, when one presents another's work as “one's own.” By not citing, a writer obscures the genealogy of source material – in other words one cannot trace the information back to its source and to further sources. Plagiarism, then, is a bastard act. Not surprisingly, in a 2004 presentation Abbi Flint examined faculty reactions to plagiarism and found that "Emotional experiences of dealing with plagiarism influence how staff may use their professional judgment when dealing with cases" (10). Flint's observation may be obvious, but her qualitative data reinforces my contention concerning what is the real problem of plagiarism: the emotion and confusion both students and faculty experience when dealing with it. Such reactions from the primary players in the drama surrounding a scene of plagiarism infiltrate the administrative processes involved in prosecuting plagiarism, a process that is further muddied by the often vague definitions of and unarticulated implications of plagiarizing.

The trickster and plagiarist align here because each figure represents a distorted and deformed doppelganger, the possible future that was aborted but has come back to life. Their lack of or question of parentage ties to their unstable identities, and for the trickster, this illegitimacy becomes the weapon with which they assault the gods or mortals of their stories. The plagiarist strikes the same discord for the publishing and academic world. Both the plagiarist and trickster are transfigurative – they reform cultural values and disrupt them in fundamental ways, ways which call into question previously accepted values. The textual play of plagiarism erases the mark that was
imposed there in the first place. The citation was a wound and the plagiarism is a re-wounding, a laying over of the scar which can be seen as restorative or corrosive. Plagiarism retells the story of the wound by neglecting to tell the story. For writing, the system of documentation frames the practice of citation. And here we return to how the trickster tricks the institution.

**The Trick of Print**

Histories of print, documentation, and western academic tradition contribute to how institutions claim organizational control over writing. Eisenstein (1979), in her seminal work on the advent of print culture *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, began her second edition by observing, “This shift [from manuscript to printing] was particularly important for historical scholarship. Ever since then historians have been indebted to Gutenberg’s invention; print enters their work from start to finish, from consulting card files to reading page proofs” (3). Eisenstein draws much of her work from deep historical research, but she notes that her own study was inspired by the anxiety demonstrated by the American Historical Association’s organizational fear of technology, a fear that sees technology as a dilution of learning and education. From the 1960s onward the AHA, which is the professional “face” of historians, has been particularly concerned with the utility of technology in historical research, and even more so in the threat that plagiarism poses to the ethics, mores, and values of research in the undergraduate and graduate institutions of learning.

The rules and procedures of documentation, instead of being a dogmatic system to which one can refer, are unstable systems that change with technology, function, and need. Sourcing, the system that documentation protects, finds its heritage in a bifurcated history that tries to maintain the esoteric and mystical nature of religion while
answering the call of the enlightenment era popularization of scientific method and procedure. Documentation methods have served as the basis of professionalization and have been a gatekeeping mechanism that ensures the standards and practices of disciplinary knowledge: disciplines that have been fortified by the academy.

However, as Sid Dobrin notes in his speech at the 2011 CCCC conference, these spaces of writing may present themselves as authorities, but there is a large majority of writers in the world who never enter these institutions. So what can the plagiarist reveal about that writing world outside the wall? Plagiarism, as the most visible form of “unauthorized writing,” allows the self-proclaimed systems of authenticity to view the outcast. However, the plagiarist is not utilized as such. The plagiarist, much like the trickster, stands in for the disruptive force, one to be challenged and defeated, rather than welcomed and fed.

At the core of western epistemologies, especially in the post-enlightenment era, opposes scientific reasoning against religious faith and/or belief. Two pieces of intellectual equipment expose the divide between reason and belief: method and contract.

Intellectual histories of Western higher education reveal the controversial position of universities as political and social places of power. In the United States, for example, a university education represents more than a curriculum of courses because of the university’s status as “an agency of social and economic mobility” (Rudolph 485). Furthermore, the university is rooted in national histories as well as the history of the Western church, histories which make reforming higher education much more difficult than simple solicitation. Because tradition frames much of higher education’s concept of
itself, the institution relies on tradition to regulate its most mundane tasks. The hold that tradition has over institutions of higher education cannot be understated.

Cultural organizations, like the academy, observe organizational rules and procedures that often mimic mythic ceremonies. These ceremonies are in place to maintain social order within the institution as well as act as guidelines for social behavior. They maintain the boundaries of textual practice that the plagiarist challenges.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s many sociologists interested in organizational theory took up the frame of myth as a way to examine organizational practices and procedures. Drawing on “cultural symbols” provides a way to understand how systems may operate, especially closed systems that rely heavily on self-efficacy for survival. If we are to portray the teacher and student not as teacher and student but as parts of an organizational structure, we then must ask ourselves what roles (or better yet, what symbols) these characters play, how do they forward the plot and progress of the organization? And what do they do that may forestall that progress? As JW Meyer (1977) notes:

Categorical rules conflict with the logic of efficiency. Organizations often face the dilemma that activities celebrating institutionalized rules, although they count as virtuous ceremonial expenditures, are pure costs from the point of view of efficiency. For example, hiring a Nobel Prize winner brings great ceremonial benefits to a university. The celebrated name can lead to research grants, brighter students, or reputational gains. But from the point of view of immediate outcomes, the expenditure lowers the
instructional return per dollar expended and lowers the university’s ability
to solve immediate logistical problems. (355)

The scholarship about the organizational behaviors and theories of higher education
may assist us in understanding how what Tierney (1997) calls the “folk wisdom” of the
university. Tierney’s study of socialization amongst tenure line faculty reveals how the
socialization into the university affects young and/or new tenure line faculty, but his
insights also open up discussion about the other principal population of the university:
students. Recently the scholarship surrounding retention and graduation rates of
undergraduates has revealed a troubling dovetail effect with the discussion of the
academic job market. The declining retention rates for both faculty and students trouble
the academy, as well they should. One possible line of inquiry relates to Tierney’s “folk
wisdom” observation and the archaic traditions of the university.

**The Traditional Destroyer**

Tradition is a fundamental component to understanding an allegorical landscape.
Usually tradition is preserved in mythical tales and ritual practices. History helps to
codify myth and ritual, to make it an integral part of the experience of a culture. The
history of both printing and the academy closely align in terms of what they value in the
production of texts. Notions of originality, invention, and ownership dominate these
institutions’ ideals. As Ohmann notes in his comprehensive study in the politics of
knowledge, the after 1970 cultural crisis of the university brought into play several
strands of anxiety: publishing expectations, academic freedom, and political efficacy.
These anxieties, then, become part of the training for faculty; they underpin
assumptions about the importance of publishing one’s own work and then are tied
inextricably to ideas about writing, especially the morality and ethics involved in writing.
Levi-Strauss argues that trickster’s power lies in its “cobbling together” or bricolage tendencies that saturate primitive cultures. The bumbling nature of the trickster is not an intentional or stylized creation but a series of fragments brought together by happenstance and chance rather than intent or purpose. This cobbling together can signal to a community member that the text is incomplete or even more poignantly that the text has always been incomplete. Tricksters’ bricolage practices can be highly charged with affect because it brings to the attention of the community something it may well have purposefully ignored prior to such an appearance.

Tricksters, according to Hyde, determine the incongruity between the cultural norms and cultural practices. The illegitimate lineage of the trickster provides a refraction of culturally illegitimate practices – the trickster is the broken mirror for the culture as a whole. Trickster figures often appear as imposters. They take the place of something that is “real” in the world and copy it so well that it is difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. The cultural fear and obsession with forgery, fraud, and other acts of identity plagiarism are not unique to the contemporary world; however, imposters also tend to form in mythic or epic cultural narratives that try to allegorize human experience. In such cases, like plagiarism for example, the possibility of obliteration induces a disquiet anxiety about texts and their creators. More precisely, obliterating a citation evacuates the writing space to allow the building over of a grave, which violates a sacred space and invites the dead to return as vengeful spirits who demand recognition and reparation. Plagiarism and accusations of plagiarism reveal the haunting nature of authorship, the specter of the author.

Plagiarism symbolizes a process of derivation and arrangement that refuses to
acknowledge previous derivations and arrangements. Plagiarism destroys tradition. The absence of or the inaccurate citation marks the place of plagiarism, but plagiarism only happens within specific textual contexts. For example, in the visual arts plagiarism often becomes pastiche, which is an acceptable method of composition. However, in writing, pastiche must always carry with it explicit reference and to ignore explication is a form of cheating.

A 2006 newsletter published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education used the results of Rutgers’s Donald McCabe and his study of academic integrity which found that “On most campuses, 70 percent of students admit to some cheating, with half admitting to one or more instances of serious cheating on written assignments” (15). The proliferation of anecdotal evidence of student cheating along with popular culture stories of plagiarism, such as Glenn Beck’s wholesale lifting of blogs and other internet sources, have turned the attention of the public to the plagiarist and have fixated that gaze on the plagiarist as deceiver. In that same newsletter the proposed solution to the problem is an emphasis on the “honor” system, which reinforces the moral values and judgments of the university. This solution again highlights the moral clause that becomes attached to the act of plagiarism. To have honor is to also have dishonor.

The trickster as a way to see plagiarism provides a culminating commentary for this dissertation. As the dissertation draws to a close, the trickster allegory turns back the attention to the savage or barbaric but in this turn, we throw a new light on the figure and the practice. The trickster can give those who teach writing and those who perceive themselves as writers a view askew.
CHAPTER 5
CODA: CONCLUSION

A Call to Reflect and Expand

This dissertation argues that to study plagiarism is to study how texts are made and how those texts can be unmade. Plagiarism unmakes authority, unmakes citation, unmakes the ontological markers that attribute words to an author. And it is that ability to unmake which drives the interest of this examination. Additionally, accusations of plagiarism support the print system of authorship, at least in its traditional form, or tradition as print has constructed authorship.

The questions at the heart of this study are what do we know about plagiarism, what do we say about plagiarism, and what can we do about plagiarism? Such questions challenge prescribed notions of what it means to create a text; in fact, these questions pressure the ideas of creation that have been conflated with invention. The bridge terms that sustain such conflations are integrity, originality, and authenticity. These terms are deeply intertwined in contemporary commentary on writing – to write is to be original, to be authentic, to have integrity. Every time an act of plagiarism is defined as such an act of authorship is invoked. The plagiarist is the ghost of the author and vice versa.

My own story of plagiarism is pedantic – interest culled from encounters between students and faculty, students and administrators. The administrative aspects of plagiarism accusations reveal the ambiguities attached to them. What does it mean to plagiarize? Etymologically the word comes from the same IE root as kidnap, so its meaning has violent conquest at its core. Plagiarism is an offensive move and it is an offense. As a result, much of the administration of plagiarism is built on defensive
moves, but the question then becomes, in defense of what? Do we administer plagiarism to defend authors? Do we do so to defend textual integrity? Research?

Questions: One of the arguments this dissertation makes is that plagiarism policies have become fallacies of tradition, based on notions of printed texts and textual production. We defend against archaic and outdated “attacks” to no avail and refuse, for the most part, to acknowledge that digital literacy has fundamentally altered the way we not only read texts but how we compose them, how we put them together, how we assemble. Digital literacy has made explicit the assemblage ethic of writing, moving us away from the author-god notion of creation, one that Barthes, among others, heralded in the televisual era. Once the screen was introduced as a device for composing stories, and by extent histories and documentaries and yes, scholarship, then the image of the lone writer was bound to transform. That transformation would and has affected what we traditionally describe and define plagiarism to entail. It reveals the aporia at the heart of each accusation of plagiarism.

The last twenty years of plagiarism studies have involved two “generational” moves, both of which have aligned incidentally (or not) with the burgeoning digital age. The first generation, initiated largely by Rebecca Moore Howard’s *Standing in the Shadow of Giants*, examined the historical features of plagiarism and their accompanying ambiguities. Her studies and research influenced scholars to study how teachers and institutions approach and define plagiarism, but the limitation of this first generation of plagiarism studies focused primarily on the waning stage of print literacy. This legacy of print laced itself through the succeeding studies and has informed the second wave of scholarship. The second generational move, which Howard
spearheaded in part, involved both cross-disciplinary discussion and a more social science, Bourdiean approach to studying plagiarism as act, using plagiarism as the object of study in both small and large scale research projects which has produced data to help explore, but more importantly, prevent plagiarism. This generation attempts to connect praxis with theory; however, the interdisciplinary nature of the studies often focuses more on the praxis, which still relies on the information and discussion culled from the first generation.

This dissertation proposes that the study of plagiarism move into its third generation, and as a part of that move, return to the theoretical discussions from which it first emerged in Howard’s work, but this time including in more extensive discussion the digital literacies which have exacerbated the plagiarism debate. As a field of study, plagiarism studies has produced a wealth of scholarship and research that cover a range of topics including histories of plagiarism, examinations of copyright, and data on student and writer behavior. And while digital literacy has informed many of these studies, we still rely to a large degree on our previous theoretical understanding and definitions of plagiarism to guide us in our work. The dissertation frames its discussion by first examining the current ambiguous and slightly violent rhetoric surrounding digital literacy as digital nativity. The analogy provides an entry point into understanding how the textual habits of younger adults and adolescents have been swept up into a metaphor that borders on savagery.

The first step is to revisit Howard’s groundbreaking concept of patchwriting, which states that there is a stage of copying that bridges paraphrasing and plagiarism, one which students often engage in during writing. Recent research into student activity
via Howard’s and Jamieson’s Citation Project posit that students’ writing habits often reflect their reading habits, that student writing exhibits a non-engagement with the text that limits their reading to the first pages of a text. This study and its findings, while still in progress, can be seen as another type of behavior that points to the hunting and gathering practices that mark the digital native/savage.

The second move is to address the institutionalized responses to plagiarism, specifically within the context of higher educational authority. The dissertation examines one such power structure in place: the Council of Writing Program Administrators and its complicity in the maintenance of current plagiarism policies and concepts. The chapter calls the council to review and revise its understanding of the social contract of literacy, specifically with regards to citation and plagiarism. As a power structure with professional authority, it has the opportunity to not only challenge accepted definitions but fund and sponsor (not monetarily but more importantly, within disciplinary culture) the work necessary to revise, discipline-wide, the presupposed concepts about plagiarism.

As a third and concluding move, the dissertation proposes a way to view the plagiarist as a textual trickster figure. Traditional scholarship has argued that the trickster, in no small part, is a figure of transformation, one who makes explicit fictional boundaries. The trickster’s task often exposes cultural prejudices and presuppositions for what they are – based on social norms that when pressured and challenged reveal the underlying violence inherent in norming one thing at the cost of another. In this case, the plagiarist can be read as exposing the costs of authorship, ownership, but more importantly the problems of citation in an age where citation has been made
invisible. The plagiarist makes visible the invisible and as a result is often villainized for those revelations. But instead of viewing plagiarism as villainy (which is always in danger of becoming caricature), what if we were to view plagiarism as the marker of catastrophic change, as the textual trickster become material at the moment of apocalypse?

This dissertation has been a study in possibilities more so than problems. The issue of plagiarism troubles the boundaries of composition in ways that are not fixable. Plagiarism and writing are coexistent and will continue to be way into the future. The purpose of this analysis was to offer what I would like to call views askew. As my work moves forward it will focus on three major areas of study: fandom studies and adolescent literacy, celebrity studies, and writing program administration and pedagogy.

As a way to give a face to the future of my study, I have included below a possible line of inquiry as a coda. I’m reminded here of the scene in the Nolan’s The Dark Knight when Harvey, the District Attorney and eventual scourge of Gotham, shows Rachel his iconic two-headed coin. Authorship and plagiarism are much like that emblematic silver piece. It would be easy to fall into the trap of justifying or defending plagiarism as another form of authorship; it is a move I resist categorically on two fronts. I happen to agree that there is a level of intellectual and ethical responsibility to limiting instances of plagiarism, but more importantly, any move to “authorize” plagiarism falls dangerously close to intellectual colonialism. If we cannot destroy the plagiarist, then we will assimilate them into the larger intellectual commune. Ruthven states that “Postmodernist fiction signals its distance from fantasies of originality by thematizing plagiarism and substituting repetition for singularity” (53). However, it is not only fiction
but other structural systems that “thematize” plagiarism and in the case of celebrity, for example, the ability to duplicate and replicate, to plagiarize, is at the heart of its success.

**A Fragmented Coda: Celebrating Citation**

This fragment pursues the intersection of fandom and celebrity studies through the ideas of citation and sourcing. Social media has changed the way participants use and cite source material, which gets highlighted in a public realm such as celebrity. The following excerpt uses a controversial case study to set up a series of observations about content creation using materials already in the public sphere and then extends that discussion into celebrity, where there is a contradictory move between a celebrity commodity’s need to be copiable and the intellectual ownership of content creation. This contrary move becomes even more potent in communities such as fandoms, where content creation is increasingly an integral part of the public relation and marketing tool for entertainment commodities and celebrities.

In January 2013 the lingerie designer, Curvy Kate, began an ad campaign that immediately caused controversy. The controversy surrounded the company’s use of an image. The image showed a woman’s flirtatiously crossed, naked leg. Words ran down her leg at random intervals: *Daring, Provocative, Cheeky, Flirty, Proper, Prudish*. For scale, *daring* sat close to the panty line while *prudish* rested near her ankle.

The image is problematic for many reasons – reinforcing stereotypes of feminine dress, employing language that hints at supporting what has been dubbed rape culture – however, the highlight of the controversy was not the company’s diction choice but rather how it manipulated an original image posted by a high school girl for a class project. The original image displayed one exposed leg peeking through a black dress
which was invocative of a Victorian sensibility about the exposed leg as seductive. Words, sitting next to marks, ran down the girl’s leg: Whore, Slut, Asking for it, Provocative, Cheeky, Flirty, Proper, Old Fashioned, Prudish, Matronly. The juxtaposition of the seductive pose with the fusion of harsh and ostensibly innocuous adjectives presents a powerful image and statement about how language supports certain types of chauvinism.

The original image, posted on May 5, 2012 and located at http://www.flickr.com/photos/roseaposey/7173294256/in/photostream, is accompanied by an explanatory narrative – tying the project to the poster’s understanding or rather misunderstanding of the wearing of hijabs. So Curvy Kate not only neglects citing the original image but reshapes the original image from a feminist statement on the social stigma attached to a woman’s state of dress to one that exploits those prejudices for possible profit. Now one can explore the ramifications of Curvy Kate’s manipulation, but for this study, the company’s reaction to the charge of plagiarism takes center stage. Curvy Kate addressed the seeming plagiarism in a January 21, 2013 post on Facebook: “Apologies for our recent post, we didn't intend to offend any of our community. We also will endeavour to source any of our future content. We hope you can forgive us. Curvy Kate x” (https://www.facebook.com/curvykate/posts/10151178105201783). As stated above, there were many issues with the company’s ad, but it is interesting to note that the apology includes a refrain with which internet users (and especially social media users) have become familiar – source your content. The phrase is a redundant signpost, even being made into a meme by Neil Degrasse Tyson, which can be found on many a tumblr dashboard. To tell one to source content seems axiomatic on some level, yet the
anxiety about content sourcing dovetails with larger and more global issues such as potential capital, ownership of ideas, and even more existential, the identity of a creator or an author in an environment that communalizes content.

The Curvy Kate case study showcases the potential fallout when one entity coopts and manipulates a source text from another; however the opportunity here is not about the discussion of remixing or remaking culture rather it is in the company’s response about sourcing content, which was presented as almost an afterthought and additionally dismissive with the use of “endeavour to source future content.” The company did not state that it would source its content but rather it would try to source its content. It would make an effort to cite, in other words.

Citation systems act in a way to (1) generate a genealogy of ideas, (2) institutionalize these genealogies, (3) value these genealogies, and (4) identify bastardizations or illegitimate sources that threaten to corrupt. Citation, then, becomes an avenue for defining not only a source’s validity but also how well that source represents expertise. In diminishing the act of citation, the company restates a widespread dismissal of citation as a viable cultural practice. As Hyland points out, for academic audiences and participants, citation practice is either an extension of new knowledge or an act of persuasion or sometimes both, and often citation is a social construction for a field or fields (Hyland 342).

Citation analysis cannot work on the large scale source that is the internet. The varied discourse communities produce innumerable nuances that would be almost impossible to catalogue. In the world of internet graphics and textual production, the Curvy Kate case study is an infinitesimal example — such adoption and manipulation
happens multiple times a second and such acts are best demonstrated in the
intersection between celebrity and fandom cultures – a liminal and transformative and
transitional space that not only uses these tools of remix but simultaneously encourages
and discourages such acts. And within this one context, the fandom community, an
attempt at citation analysis can be made.

The contrary nature of the celebrity and fandom interactive space grants readers
access to the continuous anxiety about the efficacy of source material. In the post-
Napster, current Torrent, and always present Net Neutrality age, the struggles over
content development, content sharing, and content sourcing constitute a new economic
ethos and this chapter aims to examine how celebrity and fandom cultures, in particular,
demonstrate this ethos and how it has created a different writer, a different producer,
and yes, a different student.

Follow the Source. There is No Source.

“The bottom line is: Just about anything that is on this site, on the web, on TV, on CD’s,
on DVD’s, in books & in magazines is probably copyrighted by someone.” – deviantart
Copyright Policy and Information, http://about.deviantart.com/policy/copyright/

The Curvy Kate anecdote provides a suitable frame to study and examine
plagiarism. Plagiarism and citation are terms for regulations. These regulations have
been fortified in historical moments, such as when professional organizations
seamlessly tied their bodies to citation, or when copyright laws protected distributors of
materials over their artists.

One of the hallmark examinations in postmodern criticism concerns the tentative
and transitioning lines that mark public and private spaces; such critiques elucidate a
continuing struggle over textual ownership. While copyright laws and professional codes
of ethics, in the forms of citation systems and other professional textual procedures, attempt to secure process and make it a principle, the disintegrating boundaries between what is held public and what can be held private must necessarily change these processes. As digital technologies focus on creating multiple points of access to information and as access now no longer stands as a defining factor of expertise, experts and those who guard the gates of expertise are being tasked with protecting a crumbling wall.

The most cogent exploration of the problem of the public/private collapse comes in the intersection between fandom studies and celebrity culture. The celebrity image is a staple icon in contemporary culture, and while fandom studies has just recently emerged as a field of inquiry, I would argue that fandom culture is the closeted partner to celebrity. The celebrity both belongs to himself or herself or themselves while at the same time his or her or their image is common property, part of the public sphere of images that can be saved, manipulated, and redistributed as original or as new. Celebrity culture lays over popular culture much like an operating system lays over code – it can be a mediating, interpretive layer that performs deeply embedded presumptions and anxieties about the human condition. Celebrity culture, more so than anything else, pressures claims of ownership, which produce ambiguities that fandom behaviors identify and capitalize on, and as digital technologies ease access to images and other properties, the once assumed lines of private and public degenerate, much like a bone under threat from disease.

We can appeal to the celebrity and fandom intersection as a way of seeing a “new” cyborg and post-human ethic about textual ownership emerge. It’s the body made
machine. Much of this dissertation has dealt with the anxieties surrounding plagiarism and defined that anxiety in existential terms and it is fitting that the study end with an examination of how one area or line of inquiry has negotiated those terms. In its earliest days on the internet, fandom faced punitive challenges. Corporate structures trailed fandom communities and quite often distributed cease and desist orders, but as the internet expanded both in population and viability, those corporations could not sustain such activities. To counterbalance the notion that content was being shared and manipulated on this large scale, in the early-mid 1990s we can begin to see efforts to study (and thus contain) fandom communities and their accompanying practices within categorical walls. In one almost offhand comment in her legal review of fan fiction Meredith McCardle states, “As most fan fiction writers know, fandoms come equipped with their own languages” (3). McCardle’s presumption emerges from a line of scholarship that began in the early 1990s with Jenkins, Baym, and other communication scholars who argued that fandoms were discourse communities, set up around texts and evolving in participatory power and reach.

Public Image, Private Lives, Pilfered Identity

In a recent Facebook post the star of the CW’s Arrow Stephen Amell wrote:

I’m talking about professional people who seem legitimately threatened that they’re no longer the conduit between “celebrity” and “fan.” (I need to put "celebrity" in quotation marks or I’ll get a cavity.) Does it make them feel obsolete? Gassy? There's really no way to tell. In any event... there have been a few land mines to navigate. Nothing I can’t handle, just something I’m more aware of. (Amell)
Amell’s observation and concern reveal an intuition and anxiety about the advent of social media and other digital technologies which erase the lines of gatekeeping that have been the foundation for many social institutions of access. Institutional access is not limited to designated places that we call institutions. This quote exemplifies how analogous the structures of celebrity and fandom are to the academy.

Hollywood has a similar structure but it comes in the form of publicity and public relations; those are the professional mechanisms of access. Much like citation hides rules of assumed consent, so does the public relations machine. One of the founding figures of the field, Edward Bernays, argued that “He [the responsible leader] must apply his energies to mastering the operational know-how of consent engineering, and to out-maneuvering his opponents in the public interest” (115). Bernays claimed that public relations was a way to reach a social good, even though in his later years he bemoaned what he saw as the decline of the field. Consent is a fundamental issue for celebrities and the limits of their image distributions.

The discussion about celebrity privacy often occurs adjunct to concerns about paparazzi. Recently there was a California campaign, sponsored by dozens of celebrities, to enact SB 606, legislation specifically designed to protect children from being photographed without parental consent. The issue of consent, which I would argue is categorically connected to citation practice, requires negotiation between considering privacy boundaries for individuals while still maintaining a clear freedom to speech, especially in US culture. Legislation like SB 606, which was passed in 2013, reveals how the boundaries between public images such as with celebrities are marketable but also objects of manipulation. Digital technologies that now make it
easier and create objects that are much more realistic or authentic appearing place even more pressure on trying to identify reality and virtuality.

Consent and copiability create a controversial space for image and the accompanying narrative ownership since more and more technologies like social media and manipulation software allow for erasure of origin images in favor of rearticulated copies and then the redistribution of these images as entirely remastered sometimes (often times) may revise the narrative surrounding the “original" image. And the act of rearticulation erases the signature, erases the consent, and what we often forget about citation is that the signatory act of citation hides within it the act of consent. By placing something into the world and signing it, creators give consent but to what is the issue – is it to preserve presence in absence (much like we find in the almost impenetrable Derridean ideas of “Signature Event Context”) or is it the pragmatic concerns of commercial trade especially for a culture like celebrity which capitalizes on image and narrative? Or does the advent of such technologies require that we resignify consent and by extension, citation? Citation systems proceduralize consent while at the same time never acknowledging fully that consent is a primary ideal, and the lack of acknowledgment, in turn, feeds much of the affect that occurs when citation practice changes or is entirely ignored.

By ignoring citation one may be perceived as engaging in a nonconsensual act, which plays into the often violent metaphors attached to plagiarism. As noted in the first chapter of this dissertation, many metaphors for plagiarism stem from violent bodily acts such as kidnapping and even rape. The body as text seems trite, but in the ever expanding worlds of celebrity and digital worlds, that metaphor sticks because so much
of celebrity is driven by the image of the body. This intersection is the reason I present fandom and celebrity as a lens through which we can see how plagiaristic acts, which fandom depends upon, become negotiable.

**The Constant Cs: Consent, Commercialization, Citation, and Copyright**

I chose to group these terms together as “constant” because they interconnect in ways that make the controversies over celebrity culture much more explicit. The tension between celebrity and paparazzi culture are familiar discussions especially in the United States where there can be conflict between freedom of speech and reasonable expectations of privacy, which as skirts the discussion of fourth amendment rights and privileges. While certain European countries like England and France have gone to great lengths to regulate how and when press have access to celebrity, the constant battle in the United States hinges on various presumptions of rights that often collide in interest. Consent, then, provides a suitable framework from which to view these ambiguities, especially in rapidly changing technologies that provide almost instantaneous access and distribution of information, including images.

Further, consent aligns with concerns about the rise of anonymity and the ability to post commentary and other information without signature. Never more so than in this age of digital and social media has the agency of anonymous been so clear; and to cite anonymous is to in effect plagiarize for the act of citation brings the signature of the individual into being. Anonymous parodies citation but more than that, anonymous lays bare the agency of the nonhuman or the human as crowded face, unnamed, unsigned, uncited, and unsighted. And anonymous serves as a startling opposition to celebrity – which is the named name, even caricature of the name. The term anonymous or the use of anonymity is not a recent phenomenon; in fact it is an ancient practice. However,
the employment of anonymous as agent creates a satiric and ironic space in light of tracking technologies that have become commercialized and increasingly fundamental network structures (via ISP tracking and GIS identification).

How do anonymous and celebrity collide with citation and plagiarism? The commercialization of the celebrity signature, often known as the brand, has expanded in access given network technologies that allow both fans and anonymous to create re-mastered objects, but to what ends reveal the ironic structures of both. While 4chan and bchan forums provide database repositories (almost truck stops) for internet objects like images and then act as the mother ships of memes, fandom communities extend brands, and thus are potential commercialized spaces and properties. Both “communities” rely, however, on the protection of parody.

I want to avoid here essentializing Latour’s Actor-Network theory in favor of understanding how social media platforms bring into being an agency that is already embedded in communication – that of citation as gesture, citation as genealogy. Both fandom and anonymous communities use celebrity culture as an occasion to perform speech acts that often undermine the preconceived notions of authorial provenance. Provenance, like primogeniture or any other form of inheritance, acts as a birthright document. What these communities do is similar to acts of plagiarism. By divorcing the image or the narrative from its point of origin and then remixing it into another form, both anonymous and fandom pressure and effectively erase claims of parentage, claims of ownership. Such acts also dilute or even completely obliterate claims of authenticity – authentication and verification being important metaphors in the social media landscape. For example, the Twitter platform offers the iconic blue checkmark to both
celebrities and corporations as marks of authenticity. In the end, citation is a vehicle of authentication and as digital technologies re-certify texts, the place of the plagiarist, the definition of plagiarism, and those practices based on a print ethos come under threat of extinction.

I wish to record the extinction as it takes place.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Linda Howell earned her Bachelor of Arts in English at the University of North Florida. She worked full time as a secretary for the Department of English while she worked on her Master of Arts in both English and History before applying to the PhD program at the University of Florida. Her exposure to the professional life of the department informed her decision to pursue a career in academics. She now directs the Writing Program at the University of North Florida and has helped build the university’s first fully functioning and independent Writing Center. She received her Doctorate of Philosophy in English from the University of Florida in 2016.