STANDING AT THE THRESHOLD

Working through Liminality in the Composition and Rhetoric TAship

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INTRODUCTION
Rhetoric and Composition TA Observed, Observing, Observer

William J. Macauley Jr.

I was teaching a course called Problems in Contemporary Rhetoric and Composition in the spring of 2015. The course focused largely on intersections of composition, neuroscience, social psychology, and young-adult psychology. The idea was to coordinate our intentions in teaching writing with research and scholarship in other fields toward understanding our students more deeply, thus creating opportunities to reconsider our pedagogies and practices toward increasingly informed teaching of writing. This course design originated from my work in student-writer agency and self-efficacy, as well as understanding disconnects among composition, agency, self-efficacy, cognitive development, and the psychosocial conditions our typical students might experience. I admit that the turn toward how our profession/field was understood and portrayed was a surprise, but the linkages seemed to make a lot of sense. For many, teaching writing at the college level is introduced through TAships and the orientations/trainings that accompany them. The graduate students with whom I was working that semester pointed out that their preparation for teaching writing had not enabled their feeling agentive, self-efficacious, or adequately prepared for that important work, especially if the research from other fields indicated such teaching could potentially have long-lasting and even psychological or physiological impacts on their FYC students. They felt ill prepared and underqualified, and discussions of agency and self-efficacy only seemed to amplify their senses of unreadiness.

As our conversations continued, and we read more of the scholarship on TA preparation,[1] we found what could be fairly characterized as a binary view of the field: one either set the writing programs as the priority OR one focused on the care, nurturing, and professional preparation of neophytes. To focus solely on the program or on the neophytes is possible, I suppose, but I have never met a WPA who does either, and all the WPAs I know describe the tough choices and often very difficult compromises they must frequently make to protect both. However, this

unsatisfying dualism seems to persist, but few of those discussions happen "where the rubber meets the road." Neither have we found many instances of TAs speaking for themselves in the literature. The scholarship seems to be published at some distance from the TAs; TAs are spoken for and about without their often speaking for or about themselves. That is the place where this collection began: we agreed that TAs' own voices should be much more present in these conversations, that TAs have knowledges that would benefit a number of audiences in this area. So, a primary interest for this collection was then set: TAs, both current and former, speaking directly to readers and speaking for themselves about their programs, preparations, and connections to the field.[2]

Four key concepts became essential to these voicings. First among those key concepts is *who speaks.* It has been our experience that TAs are discussed or sometimes quoted, but by and large they have had very little direct input into the scholarship *as scholars and/or researchers* about their experiences. This is an obvious problem we set out to address, not to the exclusion of other perspectives or voices but as an essential and strategic complement to them.

Liminality is a second key concept. For us, it refers to TAs working between roles and responsibilities rather than the process of crossing a threshold or accessing what is on the other side of a threshold. There is also a sense for us that these movements of rhetoric and composition TAs crossing thresholds, these transitions, are not unidirectional but recursive and repetitive. Liminality, for us, also means that being between or in transition is being neither exclusively students nor fully teachers, and potentially recognizable as neither. Although scholars have discussed liminality in relation to learning and threshold concepts, their discussions tend to be focused on the process that is to come or that has already happened rather than on what liminality means/does as an experience in and of itself (Cody and Lawlor 2011; Irving and Young 2004; Land et al. 2005). For us, in this collection, liminality alone is a limited lens because it can accept ends justifying means without critically engaging exactly what those means are for the TAs who experience them. In short, the liminality of the rhetoric and composition TAship is not a one-time jumping of the gap to credentialing but the accumulated reality of jumping back and forth repeatedly between the two, often for a number of years.

Thresholds, as we discuss them generally in rhetoric and composition, are based on Jan Meyer, Ray Land, and Caroline Baillie's work (2010) in threshold concepts that asserts the impossibility of moving forward without threshold concepts and their profound impacts after acquisition.

Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2015) have articulated threshold concepts for the teaching of writing through their collection *Naming What We Know*, which includes either five or thirty-four threshold concepts, depending on how one counts. In our case, here in this collection, thresholds are certainly informed by these works, but we think about them more as what is accumulated by TAs in a number of contexts and roles in the runup to crossing over from student to faculty, even as TAs bounce back and forth between teacher roles and student roles. So, while the ideal of a threshold concept may be a one-time passage of profound impact, in this collection we are thinking of thresholds as something a bit different. We are thinking about professional and institutional presence as TAs move back and forth between student and teacher, recipient and provider, institutional "client" (if you will) and practitioner. In this case, we understand thresholds as repeated experiences rather than singular locations, as ongoing transformations rather than distinct exigencies. We are also thinking about how rhetoric and composition TAs' experiences as TAs inform/distort perceptions of what might be on the other side of that threshold, about how those TAs' experiences mis/align with what is to come as professionals in rhetoric and composition.[3] We also question what the outcomes of such consonances and dissonances might be for neophytes making their ways into rhetoric and composition. Rather than assuming or trusting that threshold concepts might provide or ensure stable intellectual or pedagogical contexts for rhetoric and composition TAs once they have moved out of their TAships, it is worth considering the experiences of TAs *during their TAships* as indicators to them of conditions and challenges to come.

Misinformation, those dissonances mentioned above, is a fourth key concept in building this collection. There have always been ample opportunities for misunderstanding composition, and particularly troubling have been those misconceptions that discount/undermine our work as writing teachers. Certainly, there are many examples of how our work is misunderstood by central administration, faculty in disciplines outside English, and even by colleagues within our English departments but in different areas of English studies. However, of primary concern for this collection are distortions emanating from writing program inductions, from what TAs are learning about the profession from their TAship experiences. We can (and inadvertently too often do) contribute negatively to neophyte development in our own profession through choices such as treating all FYC-teaching TAs the same regardless of experience, interests, and/or engagement with teaching writing. Another way we often confound our own interests is by continuing the

"information-dump" orientation right before the semester begins or going along with "get-someone,-anyone,-in-front-of-that-FYC-class" staffing practices that too often confound the work of WPAs when they don't have full control over the courses for which they may nonetheless be held responsible. Both are necessarily reflections of the contexts within which our writing programs exist, to be sure. A more cynical reader might say these are accurate portrayals of a career in teaching writing. However, TAships and graduate programs in rhetoric and composition are necessarily but not inordinately optimistic; they tend not to just be about what seems likely given current conditions but about what *should be* given that to which we, the field(s) and the devoted professionals within it, have devoted ourselves to making manifest.

Not complex is recognizing the absence of TA voices from these discussions. We, in this collection, do not mean to suggest TAs have been misrepresented or deliberately excluded. Certainly, in the research and scholarship of Heidi Estrem and E. Shelly Reid (2012), Rebecca Nowacek (2011), Jessica Restaino (2012), Tanya Rodrigue and Andrea Williams (2016), Mary Soliday (2011), and others TAs are very present and well represented. However well TAs have been represented though, they have not often been the researchers, scholars, or voices speaking with authority on TA issues. No longer should TAs seem like repeating specters, somewhat visible but only partially and only through special lenses, repeating activities over and over, year after year, cohort after cohort, never interacting directly with those who may sense their presence without being able to fully see them. Those of us looking for the TAs (in the literature) remain unable to fully engage with them, and they (TAs, through the literature) remain unable to fully engage with us. Thus, one of the purposes of this book, beyond helping incoming and future rhetoric and composition TAs prepare for their TAships, is to turn on the full-range UV lights, so to speak, so WPAs and writing program educators who "sense" TAs' presence are able to really see them.

Liminalities, thresholds, and misinformation together are quite complex. Together, they begin to articulate the uniqueness and depth of the rhetoric and composition TAship. While rhetoric and composition TAships are liminal in the sense of being between, they are complicated by their also being thresholds TAs cross more than once, from which TAs don't acquire just one concept via a single crossing and that also foreshadow what work in rhetoric and composition actually is or could be. While there is little question TAs can fairly be characterized as both student and teacher, they can also be understood as in motion from one to the other, never solely one nor the other. We understand rhetoric and

composition TAships as exceeding any of these concepts individually and engaging all of them simultaneously—and engaging multiple iterations of each of them, as well. Rhetoric and composition TAs are living in both an overt and a more subtle liminality in the sense that they are moving back and forth between student and teacher, but they are also potentially moving back and forth between the realities of the program in which they are studying and the one within which they are teaching, the local program and the field more generally, the aspect of rhetoric and composition they teach in and the aspect in which they hope to work after TAing, the present conditions of the field as expressed locally and the future conditions of the field as expressed wherever they are employed after grad school.

So, are these dualities or continua? In some ways they are both and neither because they are thresholds; the TAship is knowledge essential to moving forward for these graduate students, and they can't move forward without it (for a number of reasons).[4] And, TAs' understandings of their work and their fields afterward will be forever changed by their TAships. However, the threshold is not singular; it is multiple and repeated because the contexts change, because the learning and exposure to the field and profession change, because the roles and responsibilities and opportunities change. This doesn't make any of the thresholds not thresholds but instead multiplies them along conceptual lines of inquiry, growth, and development. In other words, the threshold concept of what a faculty member is and does, for example, will not come in one experience or iteration; it will not be gained completely in one threshold crossing. It is so complex and situated it must be iterative and cumulative. It remains a threshold concept because it must be understood to move forward, and it changes the learner forever once it is understood, but this learning does not happen all at once. Some might argue that this discounts this example as a true threshold concept, but I argue that it better argues for the complexity inherent in what might truly be considered a threshold concept. The rhetoric and composition TAship is replete with numerous complex and recursive thresholds that must be crossed repeatedly because, even if the TAship structure is stable, the field and the world outside the TAship are not.

And, of course, in all of this, there is an ever-present risk when a substantial contingent is not included in the conversation. What are TAs experiencing? What perspectives and experiences are TAs finding most impactful? There, of course, are no singular answers, and students who are looking for one thing and don't find it may feel misled. Faculty who teach toward one perspective and find students disinterested may

become equally disappointed. That's why who speaks is such an important part of both this area of scholarship and this collection, so the varieties of perspectives are available. Triangulation is not simply a research method but a practice of careful thoughtfulness that allows consideration of multiple perspectives, larger understanding, and overlapping confirmations. Thus far, TAs have not been able to speak for themselves in terms of their own preparations; this collection hopes to begin to change that and, by doing so, increase the understanding of what the rhetoric and composition TAship is and does.

We need to hear rhetoric and composition TAs because they are the only ones who can show us what these experiences are in this moment, and in the next, and the next. They need us to be aware in order to ensure that what they are experiencing actually does prepare them for their work during their graduate studies and after. We need to hear their voices in order to know what information is resonating for them, and they need us to respond so their liminality is not quicksand and the thresholds they approach are not forced, uninformed choices. These are the concerns, questions, implications past and current rhetoric and composition TAs should be able to share directly with future TAs, WPAs, and writing program educators, and we think their voices have been muted too long.

In the interest of including these voices, this collection is built around three conceptions of participating in the rhetoric and composition TAship. The first is accessing the TAship in rhetoric and composition, learning how to make one's way into it. It makes sense to start here, and our authors offer meaningful insights on not only how to "get into" a TAship in rhetoric and composition but how to do so in rich and rewarding ways. A second move is living a rhetoric and composition TAship. In this section, the focus becomes the interaction between the individual and the roles and responsibilities they must take on. As the individual evolves and unfolds, so does the TAship. The third move is transcending the rhetoric and composition TAship. There will come a point for every TA when, rather than serving the TAship, the TAship serves them. This final section focuses its attention there, exploring and discussing options for becoming via the TAship. Overall, especially for the new or about-to-be-new rhetoric and composition TA reader, this collection attempts to reveal an arc of experience our authors and editors have shared and value.

The collection opens with a foreword from Andrea Williams and Tanya Rodrigue emphasizing the inherent call for improvisation in the rhetoric and composition TAship that is closely paired with TA reticence to admit not knowing exactly what to do at all times. Williams and

Rodrigue set out one of the most salient and least visible liminalities/ thresholds for TAs. From there, the collection moves readers through rhetoric and composition TAships. Lew Caccia argues that imitation has a rich history of utility and productive application within rhetoric and composition apprenticeship and that it should not be forgotten as a strategy now. Lillian Campbell and Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday, in chapter 2, encourage a sensitivity to embodied teaching practice, a critical awareness providing insights and evidence to support more diversified approaches and thinking about how the teaching is actually done. In both these chapters, awareness and critical engagement with teaching, as both observed and experienced, are essential strategies for accessing the rhetoric and composition TAship.

The next set of chapters (chapters 3–5) focuses more attention on inhabiting the rhetoric and composition TAship. Jennifer K. Johnson makes a salient argument that understanding the differences among TAs, by both institutional representatives and the TAs themselves, creates both opportunity and an understanding of the need for opportunities in those TAships. Kylee Thacker Maurer, Faith Matzger, and Ronda Leathers Dively dig deeply into liminality itself and how it relates to graduate student WPAs. Student WPAs' competing roles and responsibilities "trouble" the more familiar TAships in rhetoric and composition, for the TAs especially. Finally, in this section, Rachel Donegan discusses ableness and its impact on TA identity, student impressions of TAs with disabilities, and how the profound culture of ability and accomplishment complicates and, in some ways, works counter to the inclusion of TAs who are differently abled. In all three chapters, TA identity raises questions about the seeming homogenization of many writing program education designs; these authors argue that identity should not only inform TAships but be directed at making them less one size fits all.

In the final pair of chapters (chapters 6 and 7), the authors are focused on what might be characterized as transcending the limitations of TA roles and training. Kathryn Lambrecht, in chapter 6, argues that balance can be accomplished among the multiple and varying roles experienced by TAs in rhetoric and composition. She not only argues for balance but shows readers how balance might be accomplished, which calls for an identity outside the TAship that guides the work within it. Megan Schoettler and Elizabeth Saur argue that key to a sense of well-being in a rhetoric and composition TAship is what they call "generative self-efficacy," which presents a cogent argument for breaking out of good teacher/bad teacher dichotomies and supports TAs' not only being themselves but building themselves as agentive

professionals and teachers. The collection closes with an afterword by Jessica Restaino, a recognized and dedicated researcher in this area, who argues that the collection, as part of a larger currency in research and scholarship in this area, offers readers an opportunity to appreciate and explore the liminalities inherent in TAships and beyond. Together, these pieces explicate an arc of experiences TAships can include that runs the gamut from improvisation and accessing the rhetoric and composition TAship to inhabiting it and finally transcending it or recognizing its uniqueness among so many other liminalities. Together, they reveal the richness these TAships can convene through the voices of those who have lived these lives and those who are devoting their research to those experiences.

This depiction of an evolving rhetoric and composition TAship is designed first for new TAs, who need some kind of support from the field as they embark on their new roles and responsibilities. The collection provides these readers with opportunities to understand firsthand what being a TA in rhetoric and composition can be/mean. This collection can also be used by WPAs and/or writing program educators who experience any dissatisfaction with their programs or the outcomes for their TAs. These insights and voices can provide them with perspectives they may not be able to have on their own. Finally, anyone approaching anew, redesigning, or inheriting writing program education can use this book to complement and enhance their understandings of how and when TAs in rhetoric and composition can most benefit from their interventions and attentions.

In the end, this is a labor of love, for our field and our students, for our programs and our courses, but for none of these more than rhetoric and composition TAs themselves. They are essential to the continued success and operation of writing programs in colleges and universities across the country and beyond. Their contributions have not been appreciated sufficiently yet, and this collection is a step toward their having the opportunity to speak their truths. We could not be more excited about the potential of this area of scholarship, more flattered to have these contributors trust us with their work, or more grateful to be learning from these gifted researchers, scholars, and writers.

NOTES

1. I want to acknowledge here that I am /we are focusing on those rhetoric and composition TAs who plan to continue in rhet/comp in their later careers, which is one of the challenges of TA development for writing program education. Elsewhere in this introduction and in the collection itself, this will certainly not be the case.

2. The argument here is not a complex one. If we want to understand in firsthand ways what TAs in Rhetoric and Composition are experiencing, it is smart to hear their voices as much as possible, to treat them as informed participants rather than research subjects, especially considering that we are training them to do this kind of scholarly work anyway.

3. We wonder whether Rhetoric and Composition faculty can be encouraged to accept less than ideal working conditions because their TAships, many times conflicted, difficult, and led by professionals in their own field, may suggest that what they can experience as TAs is the norm, to be expected, just part of the reality of a career in Rhetoric and Composition.

4. Standard approaches can assume too much about TAs, about who they are, what they bring to the table, and what they do not. The diversification of the Rhetoric and Composition TAship in terms of discipline, identity, prior experience, financial/familial concerns, social/cultural difference, and/or academic background make assumptions about what TAs collectively have in place—thus making that threshold more complex for both the TAs and those who guide their progress. It can also make this work that much richer and more nuanced.

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1

IMITATION, INNOVATION, AND THE TRAINING OF TAS

Lew Caccia

In my experience, I have noticed many TAs bring to the composition courses they teach a definite sense of how to succeed as a writer.[1] For these TAs, the strategies for effective writing are specific to the environment. It seems TAs transfer their prior expectations as students and stress approaches toward product and process for which they have been affirmed. I have observed some TAs recall their preference toward immediate benefit, or "payback," for an in-class exercise or assignment spread over at least two class meetings.[2] Other TAs sometimes note their discomfort with assignments or activities perceived as having too many restricting requirements. Less evident is the rhetorical practice that can help enact pedagogical theory and facilitate dominant academic writing practices: *imitatio.*

Conversations about imitation are rare in pedagogy today. Perhaps this lack is expected given the dialectic that has existed between imitation and innovation in classical rhetoric and contemporary composition studies. Kathleen Vandenberg observes the studies as "concerned more with the relationship between composition students (as imitators) and teachers (as models) insofar as those relationships have potentially been sites of power, authority, resistance, and 'violence' (albeit not physical)" (2011, 112). Drawing from the perspective of social science philosopher Rene Girard, who believed that human development and rivalry are based on "mimetic desire," Vandenberg affirms the eighteenth century as an approximate chronological divide. Heretofore, the basis for theoretical and applied logic was primarily theological, thus favoring imitation as an educational and professional practice. During the eighteenth century, the ascendancy of science and technology gave rise to logic that favored innovation. Since then, imitation and innovation have existed in tension linked with the binary dissociations of product and process, form and content, originality and correctness. Teachers have hesitated

to use imitation because, for many, it connotes strict verbatim transfer and inhibits personal expression.

Responding to Vandenberg's call to "illuminate debates over imitation pedagogy in composition studies" (2011, 112) in ways that inform teaching approaches and their relationship with classical rhetoric, this article envisions locating imitation at the forefront of writing-pedagogy education and explores the bases for doing so. Specifically, by drawing on classical rhetoric and contemporary representations of mimetic models, I explore how those engaged in TA training could productively use imitation to complement TAs' prior academic success and their already substantive professional experience in nonacademic settings or prior teaching experience in secondary or alternative postsecondary environments. While a mastery of content—and the ability to ascribe the method by which the content is generated or executed—is essential to reproduce the style, tone, and rhetorical purpose demonstrated in pedagogical practice, informed imitation also integrates multiple models properly selected for emulation. As this essay explains in more detail, attention to pedagogy as imitative practice foregrounds mimesis as a new alteration by which a level of resemblance exists between the original essence and the derivation from which a novel understanding can emerge (figure 1.1). The degree of resemblance can vary among derivations, and the process of emulative selection can be a source of difficulty for imitators. Cicero speaks of such difficulty in *De Oratore*, acknowledging imitation as an affordance that preserves precision. Navigating the constraints posed by both imitative and inventive practice, Cicero recommends "using the best words—and yet quite familiar ones—but also coining by analogy certain words such as would be new to our people, provided only they were appropriate" (1967, 1.34.155).

In this generative performance, Cicero enjoys the availability of choice while entertaining the responsibility of freedom. As Cicero found among the best words both the quite familiar ones and those that are appropriately coined, Quintilian too recognized the limited scope, even the contextual impossibility, of extended verbatim transfer. Regarding one case, Quintilian explains, "We simply cannot help contriving many of [the best possible words], and of various kinds, because Latin idiom is often different from Greek" (2001, X.v.3). The case put forth by Quintilian requires an adequate resemblance between the original and the translation. While the imitator enjoys the choice of new words and figures of speech, the imitator still bears the responsibility to retain the original meaning. When effectively executed, the resulting imitation coexists with the original essence, neither superior nor inferior but
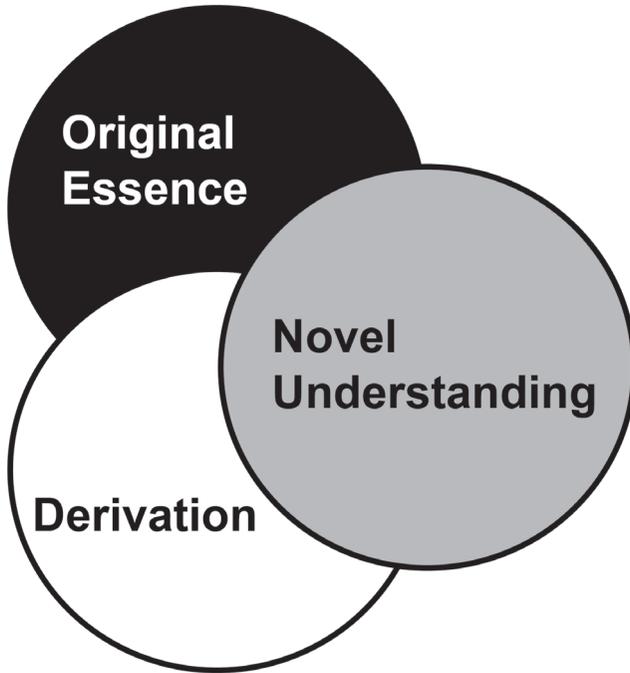
Figure 1.1. Mimesis as new alteration

complementary in a way that advances new knowledge or awareness appropriate to the context of original goals and outcomes.

Understanding imitation as an essential pedagogical method also plays a valuable role for its link with technological and evolutionary progress. Philosophical conceptions of reality are defined by the embedded quality of rhetoric within the larger discursive and material contexts of human activity: "If our art is embryonic when compared with that of the future, then the art of the past must be even more undeveloped" (Sullivan 1989, 16). Thus, by connecting the technological mindset with faith in evolutionary progress, new insights emerge only if original forms and past practice are brought to continual, collective awareness. Communicative art, then, exists as a point of analysis and contemplation: "It tries to break up and challenge experience, make us put it back together in different ways" (Lanham 1976, 114). A careful reading of these passages intensifies our awareness that we cannot produce new insights without returning to the past, so we shouldn't just ignore the past. This is not to say anyone is arguing that we should ignore the past, but this point is important because a general understanding of evolution

(both as change and as stability) is premised on the operations of imitation. Hence, this is one of the many ways imitation should be acknowledged to TAs as essential to our thinking.

The imitative practice, or lack thereof, demonstrated by TAs is a concern in the scholarship of writing-pedagogy education. E. Shelley Reid (2011) notes liminality between the TAs' writing-pedagogy education and their actual teaching practice. This liminality, which is discussed later in this essay, inhibits formalized mentoring goals and clarity on principled teaching, accounts of teaching challenges, and approaches toward those challenges. Despite the liminality, first-year TAs do typically express an implicit sense of *imitatio* in their expressed desire to enact the knowledge of their faculty mentors and practicum coordinators. For example, some of my TAs have noted in their journals for practicum the method by which their mentor distributes materials to students in the first-year composition class. They note positioning: where the mentor sits, stands, moves to another part of the room. Positioning is also accounted for in the figurative sense, how topical units are sequenced, how lessons are transitioned into one another. From a content perspective, journals note the manner by which lessons are partitioned. For example, one mentee described a class-long lesson on personification that began with definitions and descriptions of objective and subjective writing. TAs also contemplate in terms of differential imitation when questioning whether to cater teaching styles to particular students. They consider imitation in terms of limitation, whether they, for instance, agree with putting as many restrictions into an essay assignment. Mentees just as much consider imitation in terms of delineation, such as whether specific instructional practices can transfer from composition 101 to developmental English or perhaps to composition 102. TAs even consider the intangible or seemingly intangible issues of emotionally intelligent pedagogical practice, issues that include the question of how they too can build a type of relaxed, yet firm, relationship with students. In their own words, first-year TAs clearly desire to learn and build upon their existing expertise.

Because many new TAs draw more closely on their own experiences as students (or those of peers) than they do scholarship or direct mentoring—and because they are thirsty for models—working from that perspective by encouraging thoughtful imitation can be a way to help new teachers develop.

This encouragement should provide methods by which they could learn to engage and critique—in the service of understanding and enacting—instructional paradigms that contribute to dominant academic writing practices. Without a proper theoretical and applied logic,

TAs are situated at a hindrance. Similar to the way they were asked to mimic the essential qualities of academic discourse in first-year composition, we should likewise instruct them to model generative tools and disciplinary vocabulary in first-year teaching. This more thorough rhetorical grounding would provide a means by which TAs take true ownership of pedagogical principles rather than simply perform educational approaches consistent with the programmatic goals, outcomes, and rubrics that inform assessment. As this essay establishes, an appreciation for emulative selection enables speakers and audiences to perceive more acutely the variable quality of repetitive sequence and its role in unconscious workings of evolutionary progress. If discovery is the process by which we advance knowledge, then affording TAs the resources to comprehend the innovative facets of classroom practice through imitative study of their and others' teaching must not be an implicit agenda but an essential, reinforced component of writing-pedagogy education.

DEFINING EMULATIVE SELECTION

As suggested above, one way to construct this grounding within the TA curriculum is through a study of emulative selection, a neglected facet of the larger scope of imitation. I contend that by initiating rhetorical practice into the practicum classroom and thereby accentuating imitation rather than performance, we can move TAs' attention away from extended verbatim transfer and toward the more inventive yet equally complicated aspects. Figure 1.2 offers a mini wordle to help represent some of the imitable discourse processes that can be traced back to antiquity.

Emulative selection could be defined as striving to excel, especially through imitation, by careful choice or representation. A central category among imitable discourse processes, emulative selection has been described in various ways. As Dale Sullivan explains in "Attitudes toward Imitation: Classical Culture and the Modern Temper," several types of imitable discourse processes can be traced to *De Oratore* and *Institutio Oratoria*, including "very close imitative exercises like memorizing, translating, and paraphrasing, to rather loose forms of imitation: modeling and reading" (1989, 13). Imitation is generally and vaguely opposed to innovation and/or expression. This opposition, however, was not the case for the rhetorical tradition. In *De Oratore*, Cicero expands on the point of modeling as he offers an early pedagogical perspective, suggesting "that we show the student whom to copy, and to copy in such a way as to strive with all possible care to attain the most excellent qualities

Paraphrasing
Reading   Modeling
Memorizing Imitation Translating
Emulative Selection

Figure 1.2. Several types of imitable discourse processes

of the model" (1967, 2.22.90). Differentiating from the most excellent qualities of the model, Cicero offers an early version of imitation as generative work as opposed to repetitive labor, suggesting that "whereby in copying he may reproduce the pattern of his choice and not portray him as time and again I have known many copyists do, who in copying hunt after such characteristics as are easily copied or even abnormal and possibly faulty" (2.22.90). In this account, Cicero claims one can both imitate and critique any given model. Or more prescriptively, Cicero argues that imitation *should* be selective or it risks imitating faulty qualities. Exploring imitation as generative work thus brings an intentionality to imitation we don't—at least in its simplest definition—give it.

Quintilian's fundamental treatment of imitative practice in *Institutio Oratoria* can be applied across communicative forms and purposes. His efforts to incorporate rhetoric into a comprehensive curriculum offer insights that reinforce and extend Cicero's pedagogical awareness. Following Cicero's suggestion to show students whom to copy, Quintilian affirms it is from "authors worthy of our study that we must draw our stock of words, the variety of our figures and our methods of composition, while we must form our minds on the model of every excellence" (2001, 10.2.1). Quintilian complicates imitative practice on several levels, advising students to assume a critical perspective in their approach. One complication put forth by Quintilian is the inseparability of the intrinsic power of language from the effect of the speaker delivering the language. Quintilian goes as far as to assert that "the greatest qualities of the orator are beyond all imitation" (10.2.12). For the purpose of advising caution in the selection of emulative models, Quintilian attributes "talent, invention, force, facility, and all the qualities which are independent of art" as contributing toward the rhetorical force of discourse.

In addition to encouraging students to take a critical stance in selecting whom and what words to imitate (2001, 10.2.14), Quintilian also calls for integrating multiple models, drawing from not only one author or text or style but doing so in a way that coordinates with the

students' own talents and purposes. Quintilian thus presents us with an opportunity to develop theories of TAship in rhetoric and composition toward understanding the fullness of liminalities in those positions. TAs do not always enjoy the same social circumstances and power relations as their faculty. Foley-Schramm et al. offer as a case in point the "complex relationships and power dynamics embedded" (2018, 93) in their contributions toward a university-wide writing rubric. Later in this volume, Rachel Donegan offers another case of complex social circumstances and power relations in her description of a graduate student who had difficulty availing herself of the benefits of her official student accommodations. It is sometimes from their own specialized fields of expertise that TAs can attain legitimated authority from their audiences. Maintaining that even the most celebrated authorities have deficiencies subject to corrective evaluation by appointed critics and peers alike, Quintilian expresses his "wish that imitators were more likely to improve on the good things than to exaggerate the blemishes of the authors whom they seek to copy" (2001, 10.2.15). In his comprehensive treatment of rhetorical education, Quintilian thus establishes that not only can students imitate with alteration, they *must* imitate with alteration. By considering how imitation might be an act done deliberately and carefully, we can help new teachers attempt to use rhetoric as a lens to reconsider teaching practices.

As a form of critical engagement, emulative selection may not easily register among types of imitable discourse processes for an assortment of reasons. As mentioned above, given its association with behaviorism and atomistic formalism, treatments have dismissed imitation as automated, even dehumanizing at the expense of creativity and individuality in communicative practice. Classical rhetoric establishes, however, that imitative practice extends well past a student's adherence to rules and forms. Adherence to rules and forms contributes to a student's imitative practice, but it is just one facet of imitation. While we may quibble as to what certain rules and forms suggest about a student's imitative practice, we do recognize rules and forms are important facets of imitation. This is not to say we agree what emulative selection specifies but rather that it affords a picture that helps us identify and account for a student's imitative practice. If we continue to think of imitation only in terms of adherence to rules and forms, we are precluding the range of options the study of imitation has to offer students and their faculty.

To demonstrate what this focus on mimesis looks like, and what it offers TAs, I return to the studies conducted by E. Shelley Reid, Heidi Estrem, Marcia Belcheir (2012) and others who suggest liminality

between the TAs' writing-pedagogy education and their actual teaching practice. The scholars arrived at these most carefully grounded conclusions by focusing on what the TAs might say in the presence of their graduate faculty and how their core beliefs and rationales might alternatively manifest in the absence of their faculty. Partly because the subfield of writing-pedagogy education has not yet achieved a formal standing,[3] the quantity of studies measuring liminality between TAs' writing-pedagogy education and their actual teaching practice are limited.[4] The rigorous studies, however, do take multiple measures over an extended period of time and help illustrate the potential for orienting TAs toward imitative practice.

OBSERVING UNCONSCIOUS REPRODUCTION IN DISCOURSE

In attending to emulative selection in relation to the studies mentioned above, I seek to demonstrate that strategic alteration can take place with any discourse. Also, in helping our TAs understand and then utilize emulative selection, we can help demystify—for the purpose of effectively discerning—some of the difficulties they regularly encounter in enacting conventional theories presented in their writing-pedagogy education. I start with the study conducted by Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir, as well as the follow-up study by Estrem and Reid, which are multimodal and multisite, thus allowing for the examination of liminalities among and between cohorts. In discussing these studies, I draw on fundamentals of imitative practice as developed by classical rhetoricians, as well as by modern scholars.

Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir (2012) concisely note liminality between TAs' writing-pedagogy education and their actual teaching practice. Their three-year, two-site surveys and interviews with TAs reveal the TAs were more influenced by personal beliefs and experiences in and out of the classroom prior to their formal training in pedagogy than they were by the training. Less prevalent in the data was the integration of key principles into the development of syllabi, the design of assignments, and the grading of essays, among other facets of teaching. Focusing even more distinctly on two areas of interviews from the original Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir case study, Estrem and Reid (2012) differentiate between what the TAs might say in the presence of their graduate faculty and how their core beliefs and rationales might alternatively manifest in the absence of their faculty. Within these parameters, the liminality between the TAs' writing-pedagogy education and their actual teaching practice persisted into the TAs' second and third years. Somewhat

problematic in the findings was the lack of frequency by which TAs mentioned principles pertaining to pedagogy of approach and pedagogy of content.[5] Particularly problematic was the lack of frequency by which TAs mentioned principles pertaining to focus on encouraging students and focus on student learning. The studies observe how rarely the principles have translated into real evidence of the way TAs use imitation for the benefit of their scholarly practice. Offering a remedy, Estrem and Reid suggest that "*all* of our TAs would benefit from more opportunities to name principles, connect them to multiple sources, and reflect on them" (2012, 463). They are calling for TAs to enact more of their formal training and demonstrate, it could be argued, for more evidence of using imitation pedagogy in their teaching and scholarship.

My claim is not that imitation is better than the practices outlined by Estrem and Reid. Rather, my claim is that this kind of teacher education—grounded in learning theory—actually is imitation. In other words, we teach imitation but don't call it that. The specific principles and multiple sources Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir would like to observe between TAs' behavior in the presence and absence of their graduate faculty are examples of the "very close imitative exercises" encouraged in *De Oratore* and *Institutio Oratoria*. Likewise, setting forth as desired outcomes the integration of key principles from established sources into syllabi, assignments, and grading models Cicero's early pedagogical form of showing the student whom to copy. Setting forth these desired outcomes similarly relocates Quintilian's advice to deploy vocabulary, language structures, and compositional methods in ways consistent with worthy authors. TAs would thus benefit by being challenged to first understand imitation as a complex concept and then identify how and when (and why) they will imitate those (and that) whom they admire.

A broader tendency to refrain from the word *imitation* exists in both composition theory and practice. Possible motives for this hesitancy to state imitation as a desired outcome in the practicum classroom or in conversations between mentors and mentees are quite understandable. In many fields of endeavor, professionals refrain from using the word *imitation* because the term is often connoted toward its extremes. John Muckelbauer explains, "According to most accounts, the demise of imitation pedagogy is explicitly linked to the institutional emergence of romantic subjectivity, an ethos that emphasizes creativity, originality, and genius. If imitation is conversely linked to concepts such as repetition, copying, and tradition, it would thus seem to be intrinsically at odds with the inventive emphasis of romanticism" (2003, 62). From a disciplinary standpoint, perhaps one reason rhetoric and composition has not

as often engaged this concept is because of the prevalence of another word so very important to our work in the field: *agency*. Perhaps there is a collective sense that imitation compromises agency? As a field, we work to bestow agency on emerging colleagues such as new TAs, and maybe we're inherently suspicious of paradigms that compromise agency.

Despite the hesitancy to engage with the term on a more broadly defined scale, classical and contemporary rhetoricians have examined and enacted the term. The work jointly clarifies the term for its essential qualities and for its more nuanced complexities. Edward P. J. Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1971a) provides not only "imitation exercises" as resources for new discourse communities and their audiences but also testimonies about the value of imitation from Winston Churchill, Malcolm X, and other leading communicators of the twentieth century. Though Corbett can be read as grousing just a bit when he observes, "The present mood of education theorists is against such structured, fettered training. The emphasis now is on creativity, self-expression, individuality" (1971b, 249), he takes care to allow for circumstance in delineating "analysis" (i.e., close examination) and "genesis" (i.e., actual reproduction or derivation) as the operative components of *imitatio* (1971a, 27). The desire to impart imitation is also sustained in David Bartholomae's classic "Inventing the University." Though his focus is on the first-year undergraduate writer when he advises the need for the student to "crudely mimic the 'distinctive register' of academic discourse before they are prepared to actually and legitimately do the work of the discourse" (1986, 19–20), his sense parallels the call from Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir (2012) to provide TAs with the generative tools and disciplinary vocabulary from which they can draw in their teaching. People are involved in imitative exercises all the time and don't think of them as opposed to innovation; attempting to model a mentor's approach to writing pedagogy is no different than a classical student attempting to model a writer.

The whole question of the relationship between what TAs learn and how they teach is itself a question of imitation. In his Richard Braddock Award-winning essay, Dylan B. Dryer notes liminality similar to and yet distinct from that observed in the studies by Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir (2012). Having conducted interviews with first-year TAs and analyses of their responses to student essays, Dryer finds that, as novice teachers, TAs tend to stray from the dominant academic writing practices established in disciplinary literature and more often project their own anxieties about academic writing. Dryer thus calls for a distinct form of imitation that includes "deroutinizing *practices*" (2012, 441).

Accordingly, practicum would present conventional theories to TAs and offer strategies for enacting the theories; all the while, students would be encouraged to rethink genres, experiment with material or linguistic conditions, and engage in institutional critique (442–43). What might deroutinizing practices more concretely look like? Take into consideration that, in Ohio, Section 3345.45 of the Revised Code calls for a revision of tenure policy for public institutions who want state funding. In addition to the criteria of instruction, research, and service, commercialization should be added as a criterion. In practicum, faculty and TAs can explore the historical trajectory that has led to this mandate to add commercialization. When faculty present TAs with existing syllabi for analysis and discussion, they can consider how the policy might constrain and enable new syllabi and how those contingencies reflect transfer to and from public and private entities beyond the university. The deroutinizing practices Dryer calls for in developing genres, conditions, and critique establish that interpretive judgment must understand essential principles not only in isolation but holistically. With respect to the ability to cultivate individual expression cognizant of properly selected models, his point is reified by Lanham's (1976) call to partition models and then reintegrate them in innovative ways.

When TAs imitate, their writing-pedagogy education integrates the best of what they and their faculty have to offer. Or at least this would be the ideal. The notion of what constitutes best could certainly be contested. It seems natural for novice teachers to think that a majority of what they observe in a mentor would be the best, or at least above average, in teaching. I remember one of my mentors years ago telling me a story of how his mentor introduced a composition class to transcendental meditation. My mentor thought it was really cool and tried making the same introduction when he taught his first composition course—but did not find the pedagogical practice a fit with his background. What my mentor did find fit him was a sense of balance between rigor and flexibility in his work with students, a sense of balance I in turn took away and later incorporated into my teaching philosophy. Maybe this is an example of emulative selection, of differentiating, perhaps with a little trial and error, between exceptional practices in order to decide which to imitate.

As established by the scholars discussed in this section, the absence of imitation suggests novice teachers are not fully implementing their grounding in dominant academic writing practices. This gap leaves not fully realized the work of the CCCC Committee on Preparing Teachers of Writing, as well as the SIG on the Education and Mentoring of TAs

and Instructors in Composition. Imitation done deliberately and carefully enhances formalized mentoring goals and clarity on principled teaching, accounts of teaching challenges, and approaches toward those challenges. Writing-pedagogy education that acknowledges imitation and innovation also improves efforts toward validity and reliability in pedagogical practice.

Many TAs bring with them specialized knowledge, including professional writing experience in corporate and nonprofit sectors, as well as prior pedagogical experience, perhaps overseas or in a K–12 setting, a range of experience similar to that observed by Megan Schoettler and Elizabeth Saur in this volume. Hence, writing-pedagogy education that stimulates imitation and innovation helps TAs enact theories presented in practicum in ways that could be replicable, aggregate, data based, and hence more plausibly subject to Dryer's deroutinizing analyses. When TAs are able to take ownership of principles and policies imposed programmatically, writing-pedagogy education becomes more accessible in its ability to effect changes in teachers' goals and practice.

ENCOURAGING STUDENTS' UNCONSCIOUS REPRODUCTION

The time we spend helping TAs recognize imitation and innovation exist along a continuum rather than as a divide (figure 1.3) can inspire more animated teaching and more effective application of their writing-pedagogy education. Moreover, this awareness can help bridge the distance between the practice of teaching and its theoretical underpinnings. While the latter reinforces programmatic structures, it also more fluidly situates writing as teachable for its material and intrinsic value. As invention places its subject matter into question, writing and writing instruction are more than just means to an end. Critical reflective practice can help TAs see their own histories as students and writers in ways more complementary to and less divergent from their writing-pedagogy education. Describing writing-pedagogy education as an emergent area within the field of composition studies, Estrem and Reid (2012) emphasize the growing parallel between the TA seminar and first-year composition. This emphasis encourages exploration of connections between Bartholomae's (1986) efforts to instill generative tools and disciplinary vocabulary in first-year composition and Reid's endeavors to do similarly in the form of establishing standardized "mentoring program's goals" and performance assessment in yearly mentor education (2008, 52). Estrem and Reid (2012) further maintain that writing-pedagogy education extends semesters beyond the TA seminar; this argument beckons
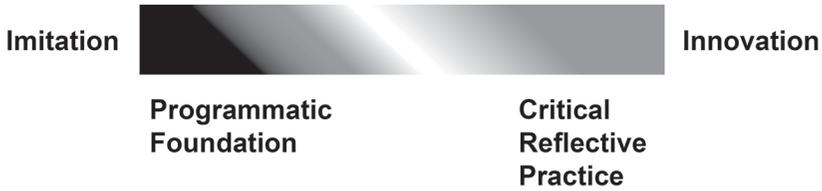
Imitation   **Innovation**

Programmatic   **Critical**
Foundation   **Reflective**
                          Practice

Figure 1.3. Imitation and innovation as continuum

questions concerning the place of composition within the academy. Lisa Ede raises insightful questions. Drawing from personal experience and alternative texts that include cartoons, Ede applies theoretical critique in asserting scholars should attend more carefully to the differences between theory and the practice of theory. In her partitioning, Ede explains "'theory' is an overdetermined term, one whose meaning and consequences vary for different persons and in different situations" (2004, 129). She designates theory as a "situated practice" always open to question. This openness aligns with the critique and reengagement scholars often associate with *imitatio*:

> When we think about the power of ideologies to influence our thoughts and actions and the multiple ways that they can discipline even the most critical, vigilant person, it may be helpful to recognize that, in Burkean terms, we are all "rotten with perfection" ("Definition of Man" 16).
>   We are all disciplined by ideologies of which we can at best be only partly conscious. And we all at one time or another intentionally and unintentionally contribute to the disciplining of others. (170)

Even Burke's theory of identification/consubstantiation is grounded in imitation. In her statement, Ede asserts that ideology is only partly conscious, though it is from ideology that people often critique and even reprimand others. This commentary reifies Burke's notion of "consubstantiality" and the notion that practitioners sometimes act on underlying principles not always visible in observed practice. Invoking a term originally used in theological circles, Burke distinguishes a sharing of essence or substance that can take on the form of physical aesthetics or deeper cognitive immersion. Burke explains, "Imitation is an essentially dramatistic concept. It makes for consubstantiality by community of ways ('identification'), since [people] can either crudely imitate one another's actions as revealed on the surface, or subtly imitate the *underlying principles* of such actions" (1969, 131). Burke's deeper analysis presents us with the possibility that when new teachers do not appear to mimic their writing-pedagogy education or the examples of their mentors, perhaps there still exists an overlap of underlying principles based on a shared

sense of dominant academic writing practices. This possibility suggests the need to not only adjust writing-pedagogy education and/or extend its length but also conduct well-structured synchronous conversations posteducation to discover potential adherence (or a self-assessed perception of adherence) that may not be so visible in observed practice.

Michael Stancliff and Maureen Daly Goggin further complicate the informative and conflictive facets of theorizing TA preparation. Central to this complication is their question, "How can teacher-trainers and mentors best identify and foster sites of ideological conflict and disagreement as a way to model a pedagogical practice of critical reflection?" (2007, 11). Their shared perspective is grounded in their experience as TA mentors. As mentors, Stancliff and Goggin insist on rhetoric as a way of helping students develop a range of possible pedagogies and in the process differentiate their own pedagogical and rhetorical assumptions. The assumptions might be thought of as Burke's underlying principles, and the differentiation can be thought of as Jessica Restaino's (2012, 16) "middle space" of safe experimentation for TAs. Acknowledging TA preparation as a hotly contested area, Stancliff and Goggin model learner-centered principles while affirming goals consistent with the mission of the writing program and the interconnection of theory and practice in the teaching of writing. These goals are similarly articulated by Stephen Wilhoit who, in his *Teaching Assistant's Handbook*, explicates "reflective teaching" by drawing from eleven years' experience as a TA director, years as a TA mentor, personal experience as a TA at three universities, and a survey of literature on TA education:

> Perhaps the most powerful aid to life-long improvement as an instructor is developing the capacity for reflective teaching. Reflective teachers actively and systematically critique their curriculum and pedagogy, identify strengths and weaknesses, explore alternative practices, and make needed changes. Developing your reflective teaching skills is one of the most important steps you can take to ensure you grow as a teacher throughout your career. (2008, 205)

Classical and contemporary scholarship establishes that imitation effectively requires rethinking and experimenting with form and constitution. Consistent with these tenets of imitation, Wilhoit argues that TAs need a wealth of information yet freedom to self-direct their syllabi, assignments, and instructional approach even if it means they sometimes fail as teachers (2008, xix). Maintaining the need for affording TAs a balance of freedom and structure, Wilhoit links imitative teaching and practitioning with the reflective facets of current writing-pedagogy scholarship:

> Reflecting-in-action is an individual act performed spontaneously in the classroom and leads to immediate decisions and actions. You usually see the results of those decisions and actions at once—your students' responses help you gauge the success of your decisions. Reflecting-on-action, however, takes place away from students, often long after a class is over. It can be performed at leisure and can involve several instructors collaboratively assessing their curriculum or classroom performance. You usually see the results of this reflection later, when you return to class and teach your students again. (206)

With respect to appropriate models, Wilhoit at the same time recognizes a need for differential training variables not only to the TAs' prior pedagogical and professional experience but also their gender, race, age, intended career trajectory, and type of institution in which they serve. Like Wilhoit and Ede, Stancliff and Goggin believe in the benefit of multiple approaches in the teaching of writing, especially given the range of experiences TAs bring. My first TA had worked as a professional journalist for close to twenty years. This was years before commercialization became a mandate for state-funded higher education, but her role in the course presented a great opportunity to consider transfer in pedagogical development to and from public and private entities beyond the university. Because I believe in the benefit of multiple approaches in the teaching of writing—and am open to new, interdisciplinary principles and vocabulary I might add to my repertoire—it made perfect sense to invite her to lead class on the day students were being taught techniques for conducting interviews.[6]

The potential pedagogical practices offered by Stancliff and Goggin (2007) are in part based on James Berlin's (1988) classification of composition pedagogies, specifically three rhetorics he finds predominant in institutional approaches: cognitive psychology, expressionism, and social-epistemic rhetoric. Among these, Berlin defends social-epistemic rhetoric as placing ideology at the center of classroom practice and affording a mechanism of criticizing—much as Dryer deroutinizes—economic, political, and social arrangements. Here, we have another opportunity to apply fresh perspectives on the liminality of TAships. Recalling that TAs do not always enjoy the same social circumstances and power relations as their faculty, social-epistemic practice helps facilitate careful assessment of the collective benefit of the way TAs draw and disseminate from their specialized fields of expertise. According to Berlin, the social-epistemic perspective recognizes teaching is always political and contingent upon economic and cultural contexts (490). In facilitating personal reflection and autocritique, individualistic ideology informs the improvisation characteristic of expressivist rhetoric. Stancliff and

Goggin (2007) caution that some of their TAs view Berlin himself as politicizing writing instruction in his adamancy that teaching is always influenced by ulterior motives that select from ranging assumptions of what is good, real, possible, and appropriately administered.

Nevertheless, encouraging TAs to consider the concept of unconscious reproduction can help them think about translating respected pedagogical models into their own classroom practice. Imitative technique need not impose restriction upon TAs but rather provide impetus for critical stance, innovation, creativity, and individual expertise. We can accordingly apply the complexities of key principles, disciplinary vocabulary, dominant academic writing practices, the sources from which they are grounded, and the material or linguistic conditions of the local classroom.

We can apply these complexities to measure and account for the objectives and outcomes that attend the various degrees of modeling and other forms of imitative exercise. In their essay in this collection, Lillian Campbell and Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday apply such complexities to dissect the use of space for the purpose of modeling a student-centered classroom. Also in this volume, Jennifer K. Johnson discusses modeling as a practice that can help negotiate the competing paradigms of literature and composition, and Kathryn M. Lambrecht offers modeling as an approach to eliciting community and identity in the texts of first-year writing students. Though introducing students to the study of emulative selection is not the only way to foster rhetorical awareness in writing pedagogy education,[7] it is an approach to helping new teachers appreciate programmatic goals, outcomes, and rubrics as more than mechanical or habitual repetition. As this introduction at the same time challenges TAs composite experiences and successes by assuming critical reflection, it offers a means toward encouraging more intricate ways of enacting acquired expertise. Instructing TAs to cultivate emulative selection as unconscious reproduction that brings into consciousness the affinity among teachers, their students, their mentors, and their discipline allows them to perceive, reproduce, and comprehend the variability of the form and function of imitative discovery—a more encouraging possibility compared with resisting this work or reducing it to performance. This emphasis also progresses imitation from textbook exercises to an essential place in the making of knowledge for both teaching and writing. In a way appropriate to particular circumstances, imitation is not set forth as a finite range of categories and features of discourse (sentence types and other syntactical units, for example) but rather as heuristics for expressing ideas in styles that negotiate difference among various

discourse communities. Said another way, TAs would learn generative possibilities rather than anticipated shortcomings.

REINVIGORATING IMITATION STUDIES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The rhetorical training of first-year composition teachers should, of course, overlap with the research undertaken by scholars of rhetoric and composition. We can envision, experiment, and enact ways of bringing imitation into the practicum classroom. We can help new teachers develop intricate methods of adhering to rules and forms by presenting them with ways to integrate multiple models properly selected for emulation. We can set about enunciating as a discipline the rationale for the necessity of such focus. As I emphasize emulative selection, which is just one facet of imitation, I do not aim to preclude areas of inquiry that represent imitative study as a comprehensive field. Rather, focusing on the training of TAs allows me to offer a purpose imitative study might serve in writing-pedagogy education. Equally important is the purpose writing-pedagogy education can serve in detailing what imitative studies look like. As Vandenberg has observed, an opposing tension exists between imitation and innovation in composition studies: "In large part, this is because those against it see imitation as working against innovation; they see the form constricting and restricting both the content and the individual wishing to express himself" (2011, 125). Integrating imitation—including a mature, comprehensive awareness—can help writing-pedagogy educators comprehend its disciplinary record and relationship with classical and contemporary rhetoric.

Attempting to modernize or refurbish classical insight accepts not only discourse that appears consistent with original essence but also takes into account strategic alteration. Indeed, it is exactly classical rhetoric's treatment of generative performance that can help us direct our TAs toward the relationship between mastery of content and innovative occurrence. Surveying the process of emulative selection among conventional theories and pedagogical models offers deep resources because such selection involves the largely unconscious critical engagement TAs use in their actual classroom practice. I further maintain that attention to emulative selection, and imitation more broadly, can contribute to closing the gap between theory and practice (graduate education in general), as well as between students' formal training and prior professional experience (writing-pedagogy education as a field). Writing-pedagogy education could serve as a central locale that emphasizes imitative features of discourse helpful to practicum coursework and mentoring arrangements,

such as those categorized in this volume by Kylee Thacker Maurer, Faith Matzker, and Ronda Leathers Dively. Ultimately, imitative studies in writing-pedagogy education have the potential to elevate not only the rhetorical capacities of our TAs but also our concept of writing-pedagogy education as a field and our ability to inform discussions pertaining to liminality in the academy and the public sphere.

NOTES

1. I extend sincere thanks to editor Bill Macauley and the anonymous reviewers for their detailed feedback and guidance. Many thanks also to Suzanne Wasilewski and all the TAs with whom I have worked.
2. In these cases, TAs sometimes recall having asked themselves as undergraduate students what the assignment had taught them or what they now know from the assignment that they didn't know or understand beforehand. In these recollections, TAs posit that the students their mentors are teaching would not immediately see how the assignment benefits them because they have to finish it in the next class session.
3. Reid (2011) rightly encourages establishing writing-pedagogy education (WPE) as an official subfield to complement existing disciplinary structures, including the CCC Committee on Preparing Teachers of Writing and the SIG on the Education and Mentoring of TAs and Instructors in Composition.
4   Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir (2012) encourage disciplinary colleagues to continue similarly designed cross-sectional research projects that would add to the pool of variables examined at specific points in time. Lauren Obermark, Elizabeth Brewer, and Kay Halasek offer one continuation that reports "demonstrable differences in individuals' senses of preparedness and autonomy" even among second-year TAs (2015, 35). The data from their study informs a professional-development program by which the researchers collaborate with TAs, incorporating their background and perspectives.
5. In Estrem and Reid's (2012) taxonomy, pedagogy of approach includes classroom practices and community engagement; pedagogy of content includes teaching critical reading, teaching writing as a process, and expanding students' understanding of writing.
6. From my TA's experience, I learned to incorporate into the lesson the principle "endure awkward silences." Interview subjects will eventually speak even when they are initially silent in response to a question. I also learned to advise students to specifically ask for anecdotes while interviewing. Anecdotes help provide data with depth and dimension.
7. Exposure to ethos, pathos, and logos would be a textbook example, literally and figuratively, of existing alternative efforts to incorporate rhetorical awareness into the curriculum for first-year TAs.

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