

Chapter 1



Engaged Scholarship at the University

The complex relationship between the university and the city provides the context for this chapter, which explores not only the changing nature of scholarship in the metropolitan research university, but also how its changing intellectual climate should, in turn, change our conception of writing instruction for students who attend college in the city. Historian Thomas Bender argues for “a university *of*, not simply *in*, the city” (1998, 18). Each entity, the university and the city, has a particular intellectual or cultural trajectory. Their needs are different but each provides a measure of balance. Bender describes the preferred modality of each:

The university is best at producing abstract, highly focused, rigorous and internally consistent forms of knowledge, while the city is more likely to produce descriptive, concrete, but also less tightly focused and more immediately useful knowledge, whether this is generated by businessmen, journalists, or professional practitioners. The academy risks scholasticism, but the culture of the city is vulnerable to the charge of superficiality and crude pragmatism. (19)

Even as Bender sets up this series of binaries, he cautions against solidifying this set of differences into monolithic, self-contained institutional entities. Outside of universities, Bender finds examples of exciting opportunities to reconnect research and advocacy, such as Lower Manhattan’s Silicon Alley, an “incredibly dense interdisciplinary world of writers, artists, and computer freaks, making multimedia CD’s and other interactive media creations, some commercial products, [and] some art . . .” Rather than promoting a hardening of the two camps, Bender wishes

to see a transmutation in which engagement suggests a repatterning of knowledge production, intellectual activity, and advocacy for change. The university *of* the city heightens its emphasis on localized knowledge without foregoing its historically purposeful approach to scholarship (21).

I begin this chapter with Stanley Fish's argument against engaged scholarship. Stanley Fish raised issues of writing instruction and civic engagement in both national, professional venues as well as in local contexts while he was Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Since UIC, has, itself, for the past decade and a half, encouraged an increasingly dialogic relationship with the city, this debate creates a fitting opening for the chapter. Fish—a vigorous opponent of both service-learning and engaged research—argues for disciplinary scholarship as a self-contained, coherent practice that depends on a particular body of knowledge. I, however, argue that disciplinary scholarship is changing as institutions reconsider knowledge-making practices. Fish's focus on the scholar's embeddedness in a particular set of practices rather than on the discipline's content provides an unintentional opportunity to use his argument against him. Fish's notion of embeddedness, I demonstrate, provides a strong argument *for* engaged research. When both faculty members and students focus on engagement, we enhance our relationship to the city while also enhancing undergraduate education and, in particular, writing instruction.

After a brief discussion of what engaged scholarship and research is not, in the section, "How Discourse Drives Engagement," I argue that this sort of participatory, reciprocal research depends on an awareness of research as a discursive practice; that is, on how language and rhetoric are used to shape emerging knowledge. In the section, "The New Learner Writes," I make the transition to student learning. Certainly students should learn to engage in public debate and to produce written arguments that take positions on important issues, but the more subtle and hard-won pedagogical prize will be a student who takes part in the sort of transdisciplinary, discourse-focused scholarship conducted by faculty members. In this section, I liken the contemporary student's foray into new spaces and new genres to Keith W. Hoskin's "new learners" of the latter half of the eighteenth century for whom writing and its new uses supersedes the traditional of oral exams. Student writing also defines the next section, "Educating Citizens to Write." Here, I offer a critique of the reflection essay, a prominent service-learning classroom activity typically employed to capture the learning generated by community-based service activities. This critique, continued in chapter 4, illustrates how the embedded nature of the students' activity contributes to both scholarly understanding of the issues under exploration as well as to a sophisticated awareness of how writing supports learning. The final section, "When Students 'Walk' the City," suggests that the repatterning of knowledge-making practices suggested above by Thomas Bender can be achieved by conceptualizing the university as a spatial entity.

Changing the Kind of Thing We Do Around Here

Traditionally, faculty members at research universities do two things: they teach students and they conduct research. In the popular press as well as in his scholarly work, Stanley Fish has insisted that university faculty should do these two things within the context of disciplines and not as political action. Further, he insists, our teaching should focus on bringing students into the practices of a particular discipline—in his example, literary criticism. This is “the kind of thing we do around here” (Fish 1995, 16). In the discussion that follows, I will enlist Stanley Fish, almost certainly against his will, to support my agenda for redesigning first-year writing classes. I argue that one needn’t choose to be “inside” or “outside” a discipline. Rather, the notion of disciplinarity and our core ideas about making knowledge need to change. Most readers of Fish understand his argument validating discipline-centered work as one focused on the key questions asked by the discipline. I focus instead on his interest in embeddedness, which places a writer inside a situation and which defines the choices that might be made by that writer.

This feature of scholarly activity, embeddedness, which Fish claims for disciplinarity, I claim for the engaged university and for first-year writing instruction (see also Butin 2005). Engagement, which focuses on making knowledge in partnership with others, depends on a scholar’s embeddedness in a particular context as well as in a particular discipline. When a first-year writing student or a faculty member writes from an embedded position, that writer makes rhetorical decisions drawn from the complexities of a particular context. The student writer must see him or herself in a “lived situation” that calls for writing. This is what Fish claims for scholars of literature and I extend this claim to first-year students who study writing at an engaged institution.

Fish describes the work of the disciplinary specialist as one who is defined by, “traditions, histories, techniques, vocabularies, and methods of inquiry” (Olson 2002, 9). Specific academic practices are built on these features and help participants say what is distinctive about literary studies and what it is not.¹ Fish’s discussion of literary scholarship depends on a sense of what it means to be a professional in this particular area. He relies on the notion of “immanent understanding” from legal philosophy to characterize an insider’s grasp of the profession’s practices: what questions might be asked; what answers might be given; what routines are habits of mind or hallmarks of the specific profession (Fish 1995, 20–21). The work of a literary critic is distinct not because of any particular content—the study of eighteenth-century British literature and drama, for instance—but because that participant grasps, “a coherent set of purposes . . . that inform an insider’s perception,” that allows him or her to listen with a critic’s ears (1995, 21).

As an example, Fish takes us through a reading of the first three words of John Milton’s *Lycidas*. Just three words, “Yet once more,” sustain Fish as he illustrates the rich interpretive context that a traditional literary critic draws on to

say what the poem means. His purpose, however, is not to argue for the truth of his analysis; rather he wants us to see the practices he engages in to articulate the words' meaning. Fish asks: does 'yet' mean despite, or, does it refer to a sense of exasperation—must we do this again—as in 'yet once *more*?' (1995, 4). These alternative analyses—and he presents many rich and varied examples of others—depend on a set of discipline-based questions—routines, if you will. He explains:

To choose between these readings . . . is to choose between the alternative imaginings of the situation from which the words issue, where "situation" is an inadequate shorthand for such matters as the identity of the speaker—what kind of person is he? where has he been? where is he going?; the nature of his project—what is he trying to do?; the occasion of its performance—what has moved him to do it? (1995, 4)

The answers to these questions cannot come from the text. If they come from anywhere, Fish argues, they come from the critic's embeddedness in disciplinary practices, practices that are immediately obvious to anyone who engages in them but equally mysterious to anyone outside that group of professionals (1995, 6). The distinctiveness of these practices helps to characterize the discipline as what it is and more importantly for Fish, what it is not.

Political work, such as efforts to redress inequality or support diversity are outside the scope of literary work and, Fish claims, will dissolve the distinctiveness of disciplinary ventures. If we want to influence legislators, we should hire a lobbyist; and, if we want to change the world, that's all right, just don't call it literary criticism. He offers a quip attributed to Samuel Goldwyn who said about his films, "If I wanted to send a message, I'd use Western Union" (Fish 1995, 2). Or, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Fish proposes that if you, a scholar of literature, attempt to interpret a poem to advance a political cause, "you will be pretending to practice literary criticism, and you will be exploiting for partisan purposes the discipline in whose name you supposedly act" (Fish 2002a). Thus, Fish separates disciplinary activity and political activity into two mutually exclusive spheres. Political activity, which he lumps together with engagement, outreach, and service learning has no place in the context of literary work and further, no place in English departments.

Fish offers his tightly conceived definition of disciplinarity, based on distinctiveness, as an argument against the idea of the engaged university. On the other hand, the Kellogg Commission says that disciplines and their distinctiveness are precisely the problem with universities. This commission, created by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and funded by a \$1.2 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation, assembled a group of twenty-four presidents and chancellors of public universities who, through a series of reports, proposed a new understanding of

engagement for public, land-grant universities and colleges.² The Kellogg Commission's 1999 report responded in part to the fact that universities are seen by the public as unresponsive and out of touch with societal needs for access to knowledge. The public, they say, perceives academic governance as a "near-inscrutable entity governed by its own mysterious sense of itself" (1999, 20). They go on to say, "although society has 'problems,' our institutions have 'disciplines'" (20). Disciplines, like silos, are self-contained entities, concerned only with narrowly focused research agendas. Thus, the commission reasons, they have lost sight of the institution's mission to solve contemporary social problems. The solution, according to Kellogg, must be found in interdisciplinarity because no single discipline has the answer to society's problems.

To summarize: Fish argues that disciplines *should* be like silos, distinctive and self-contained. The Kellogg Commission says no, disciplines-as-silos are precisely the problem. The Commission offers interdisciplinarity as the way that universities can help solve contemporary dilemmas. Fish, however, anticipating such a response, cautions that interdisciplinarity is, in fact, a logical impossibility. How can disciplines with their unique ways of knowing, their deeply embedded practices, collaborate to solve a social problem? Such a Utopian synthesis would collapse under the weight of its own grandeur and the component disciplines that labored in particular fields would disappear (Fish 1995, 73). It is important to note here that Fish aimed this critique of interdisciplinarity directly at the then-burgeoning field of cultural studies which hoped, quite apart from ongoing discussions of the engaged university, to (a) transform literary studies into a more social relevant and consequential endeavor; and (b) combat disciplinary fragmentation by "taking the entire social 'text' as its object of study" (Olson 2002, 19).

Now, you may reasonably ask, what do these arguments about disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity have to do with first-year writing programs or with the engaged university? Both disciplinarity, as defined by Fish, and interdisciplinarity as wished for by the Kellogg Commission, *appear* to depend on the movability of borders. This focus on borders points us to content: what content is appropriately studied in a particular discipline and what content is outside the purview of that discipline? Fish seems focused on content when he separates political work from literary criticism. Yet, the discipline of composition and rhetoric, with its responsibility for both teaching and research, does not depend on the distinctiveness of content to define itself. Rather, it draws on a deeper feature of disciplinarity, embeddedness, discussed by Fish but hardly mentioned in recent discussions of his work. In Fish's argument, embeddedness refers to a scholar's participation in the particular practices of his or her discipline, however, in this book embeddedness characterizes a participant's deep involvement in specialized communities of practice populated by community and faculty participants working together to find solutions and responding to pressing concerns.

While the idea of distinctiveness allows Fish to make the case for preserving a particular kind of literary studies, it is his idea of embeddedness that drives successful writing instruction. Think back, if you will, to Fish's reading of "yet once more," the first three words of *Lycidas*, and his description of what the literary critic must do: the critic, who, let us not forget, is also a writer, must "choose between the alternative imaginings of the situation from which the words issue." The critic must become part of the context in which the text was written and imagine the rhetorical and textual issues that apply. This embedded work, cast by Fish as literary-specific, discipline-centered work, is, in fact, what all writers do and provides the key message we want to send students who learn to write in the context of an engaged university.

Thus, a key feature of Fish's "distinctiveness" argument, embeddedness, helps us to understand the potential that writing instruction offers for students in writing or service-learning classes. Embeddedness places the writer inside a writing situation so that the language he or she uses constructs that situation. Whether interpreting a poem or writing a needs statement for a local not-for-profit, the writer must construct an imagining of the situation: of its key features, of the ways it has been represented historically, of the need that the writing responds to, and of one's writerly position in that situation. It's not the subject matter one is being asked to write about, but as Fish argued above, it's grasping, "a coherent set of purposes . . . that inform an insider's perception," and listening with a critic's [or writer's] ears (Fish 1995, 21; my addition). Notice how embeddedness subverts the usual distinction between literary studies, in which students are seen not only as consumers of text, and writing instruction, but also in which students become producers of text. Writing practices, when embedded in specific situations, allow students to be both consumers and producers of discourse.

I believe it is his deep appreciation of this feature of disciplinarity—embeddedness—that prompted Stanley Fish to proclaim in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that "Every dean should forthwith insist that all composition courses teach grammar and rhetoric and nothing else . . . Content should be avoided like the plague it is, except for the deep and inexhaustible content that will reveal itself once the dynamics of language are regarded not as secondary, mechanical aids to thought, but as thought itself" (Fish 2002b). This diatribe, repeated again and again in horror on composition listservs, was taken by many to be a cold and self-serving dismissal of composition and rhetoric's years' long development as a discipline. For now, let's ignore Fish's administrative approach—change by decree. By excluding content and by isolating grammar and rhetoric to be taught with "nothing else," Fish appears to be brandishing the "grammar hammer," a putative tool that, wielded with heft and accuracy, can pound students' errant sentences into correct forms. Fish's argument is more complicated than most assume.

When Fish refers to content in the first-year writing classroom, he is pointing, I believe, to the sorts of readings used by cultural studies theorists in first-year writing classes. These readings carry out the aims of cultural studies, and as Fish sees it, point students toward a particular brand of critical self-consciousness and, to his dismay, toward particular political positions. Cultural studies writing assignments, usually academic essays, ask students to analyze the social landscape they have just read about or observed. Students write about how racism takes its toll, how gender defines our lives, or how shopping malls reshape our desires. Cast as radical pedagogy, this sort of teaching actually traps students into writing for teachers about their newly won critical consciousness. It is, as Fish points out, a form of reflection that does not stem from an imagining of any situation other than the classroom.

There is, according to Fish, another sort of content, which is “the deep and inexhaustible content that will reveal itself once the dynamics of language, or writing practices, are regarded not as secondary, mechanical aids to thought, but as thought itself.” This other content, “deep and inexhaustible,” emerges from the function of words within syntactic structures. Those syntactic structures, crafted through a rhetorical desire for meaning, can only emerge from a writer’s deeply participatory presence in a particular situation. When, as you’ll see later in this chapter, students produce a brochure to warn parents about lead poisoning, they, too, are performing in language as part of a larger project.³ Unlike the school-based argumentative essay or research report in which students manipulate content for the teacher, the brochure requires something different. Teaching first-year writing classes that build on the sort of deep participation desired by Fish cannot be accomplished by individual teachers or in the context of particular disciplines. Such a change requires that we imagine a geo-rhetorical space that extends across disciplines and, more important, beyond the university’s intellectual and physical space.

Important Work, But Not University Partnership

Before elaborating on engaged scholarship, I wish to respond to two alternative definitions for engagement that are receiving significant attention. First, I discuss the role of the public intellectual who speaks out on public issues but who, I argue, does not contribute to the sort of institutional change necessary to reshape our knowledge-making practices. Another popular model for engagement is public work, which involves both activist agendas and efforts to improve public dialogue. The work of activists who pursue agendas for social justice as well as the work of organizations that support public dialogue on critically important issues contribute to improving our lives. My purpose in this book, however, takes on that unwieldy entity called the university and asks how

it, as an institution, can reshape its teaching and learning activities in ways that engage all stakeholders in reciprocal and collaborative practices.

While the public intellectual has always played an important role in academia, this high-profile faculty member does more to divide the university from the city than to connect the two. Even so, the public remains interested in this public figure, hoping that his or her contribution will improve the social fabric. This interest in the public intellectual is not new; in some ways it recycles a long-standing debate about the university's terms of engagement with its public. Richard Posner cautions against an academic pedestal for the public intellectual, a role which he says is in decline. Posner offers a market-driven analysis focused narrowly on academics who direct their intellectual activity through the media at a public audience to comment on political matters or to function as a social critic (2003, 23–24). Posner's economic analysis suggests that the potential supply of public intellectuals might be greater than the demand for them. Many bright young assistant professors can design careers that produce outward-directed scholarship, but most will not achieve success. The costs to the scholar for this activity, Posner argues, are considerable. First, the ability and intellectual maturity to perform successfully in public are not talents held by all. Second, a young scholar who jumps the track of his specialty risks the derision of his colleagues who see this move as a bid for notoriety that precludes scholarship. Third, publications with a trade press bypass the traditional methods of ensuring quality through academic peer review placing the young scholar in a precarious position for internal academic review (Posner 2003, 81). Finally, only a small number of performing academics who have an interest in being a public intellectual ever reach the superstar status that Posner says marks their success (2003, 402).

The public intellectual's activities serve to distinguish this individual from other faculty members and from other communities both within and outside of the university. Superstars like Cornel West, Stanley Fish, Norman Mailer, or Susan Sontag who, it is agreed, produce important and consequential scholarship, will not contribute to a broad, institution-wide reshaping of faculty activities or of a renewed mission for the engaged university. The terms of their engagement as public intellectuals is not reciprocal; their task is to comment on, explore, or translate current issues. The direction of their work is typically one way, a form of broadcast from the university outward toward the masses. And, the public intellectual's comments highlight the individual, not the institution. Thus, public intellectuals perform a valuable function, but they do not contribute to a re-imagining of the university as an engaged institution.

Several universities have defined engagement as public work, which sometimes depends on activist traditions and sometimes on improving public discourse. In this section, I offer a definition of public work and an example of a very impressive organization, The Public Square, that supports public dialogue, but

that operates outside of a university's infrastructure and as such can't contribute to the institutional changes necessary to undergraduate education needed to design opportunities for students to write in embedded contexts. Some argue that the idea of public work should regain its former dignity and further, it should characterize the work of the engaged university. Public work, according to H. C. Boyte and N. N. Kari, means "patterns of work that have public dimensions (that is, work with public purposes, work by a public, work in public settings) as well as the 'works' or products themselves" (1996, 202). Boyte and Kari look back to colonial times for a model of public work that could connect the everyday activities of work, home, and family with participation in the public sphere. The early settlers knew that they would only prosper if they worked together to keep homes, churches, pastures, and roads functioning. Working for the common good, or as it was known then, "the commonwealth," soon extended to a concern for solving social problems.

Chicago's Public Square offers an example of a contemporary form of public work. Its 2003–2004 agenda, for instance, focused on democracy and citizenship and aimed to "foster[s] debate, dialogue, and exchange of ideas about cultural, social and political issues with an emphasis on social justice" (The Public Square). I attended a symposium sponsored by this not-for-profit organization at which three speakers, known for their contributions as teachers, activists, and writers, engaged the audience in a discussion of what constitutes activism. Their conversation also shed light on the nature of public work. I sat on a folded chair watching the speakers prepare for the event. Juvenile Defense Attorney, Bernardine Dohrn, director of Northwestern University's School of Law's Center for Children and Family Justice, sat in the middle of the three speakers on a long black sofa; she jotted down notes and questions on a yellow pad. To her left sat Barbara Ransby, the executive director of The Public Square, a social activist, and faculty member at the University of Illinois at Chicago. On the right sat the invited speaker, Grace Lee Boggs, a social activist, now eighty-eight years old, who would talk about her memoir, *Living for Change* (1998), which examined her evolving Asian-American identity in the context of her work with the Black Power movement.

This thriving enterprise, The Public Square, was established by Lisa Yun Lee and a group of former graduate students from Duke University to create a space for important public conversations. The board of directors includes several faculty members from the University of Illinois at Chicago who have been aggressive supporters of this fledgling experiment in promoting public discourse. At the Grace Boggs event, Barbara Ransby explained that, after decades of experience in direct organizing for social justice, she has shifted her priorities toward the critical goal of getting people to talk to one another. She admitted that she doesn't have a blueprint for The Public Square, but she was eager to talk about what she learned from her biographical and historical research on Ella

Baker's participation in the Black Freedom movement (Ransby 2003).⁴ More than studying the "big marches or the eloquent speeches," Ransby argued, "we need to look at human relationships and networks of relationships that were sustained around a certain set of values and a commitment to struggle." Ransby learned from her study of Baker's life that "how we talk to people, how we disagree, how we come to a different understanding is more important than getting to that "correct position." What Ransby found in the work of Ella Baker and what the audience at the Grace Boggs event found in the three speakers was a sense of embeddedness in particular historical contexts that drove each person's speaking and writing activity. The Public Square, through its events and coffee shop conversations, has gifted Chicago with an opportunity for ordinary citizens to participate in improving public life. The question before us, however, concerns how *the university* can re-imagine a form of engaged scholarship that contributes to improving public life.

How Discourse Drives Engagement

An increasing number of universities have, through mission, through historical legacy, and through administrative infrastructure, redefined themselves as engaged universities. This sort of institution is committed, Barbara Holland explains, to "direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, expertise and information."⁵ Such a university mission not only changes the relationship of the university to its surrounding metropolis or region, but it also changes student learning. The often invisible link, I claim, between engagement and student learning becomes visible through our use of language and in particular, written discourse.

Engaged scholarship begins with a sense of embeddedness, not in the self-contained, disciplinary sense, but in specialized communities of practice that exist across departments and across institutional boundaries. I expand on the notion of communities of practice in chapter 2, but for the present, I'll define them as groups of people who come together strategically to solve particular problems rather than groups that come together as members of historically established institutional structures like academic departments. However, to grow and take root, engaged scholarship also depends on an institutional mission that values reciprocal partnerships and the mutually beneficial production of knowledge. In *Knowledge Without Boundaries: What America's Research Universities Can Do for the Economy, the Workplace, and the Community*, Mary L. Walshok challenges universities to respond more effectively to the "knowledge needs of a postindustrial society" (1995, xvii). In order to remain viable, research universities need to continually revise their response to these knowledge

needs, which means not only finding new ways to access, sort, synthesize, and exchange information, but also to develop discourse communities that transform mere information into powerful new understandings through the use of language (1995, 19). This complex view of knowledge-making must, however, be supported by institutional structures that provide a conceptualization of knowledge based on multiple sources of information and reciprocity among academic faculty and off-campus constituents (13, 26).

The urban research university's push for engagement aims to redefine the, admittedly, oversimplified town-gown relationship in which the university on the hill is seen as spreading wisdom to the town below. This new direction offers a radical departure from the possibilities initiated by the Morrill Act of 1862 and the decades-long efforts and outreach and extension by which universities provided support to communities in need. New understandings of engagement function as an antidote to the "server-served" relationship (Keith 2005; Feldman 2003). Engaged scholarship also provides an antidote for the research-based practice of raiding communities for data and for savaging thriving communities to build college campuses (Maurrasse 2001; Muthesius 2000; Wiewel and Broski 1999; Perry and Wiewel 2005).

In this new context, faculty research is defined not solely by historical disciplinary standards, but by its ability to incorporate a wide range of stakeholders who bring to the table both vernacular and academic ways of knowing. The new dialogues that result from collaborative projects that cross university boundaries produce radically different kinds of knowledge. Michael Gibbons working with an international team of sociologists (Gibbons, et al. 1994) characterized this institutional shift as a radical, epistemic change that is transdisciplinary, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, and collaborative. For example, UIC Professor Olivia Gude initiated the Chicago Public Art Group which partners with "city agencies, private firms, and other organizations to produce community-oriented, site-integrated public artworks in which artists work with architects, designers, and engineers" (Gude 2000, 2). This group illustrates how transdisciplinary, reciprocal partnerships work. To proceed, the organization identifies a site-specific idea for developing a "place" and engages all stakeholders in a dialogue. The group moves ahead collaboratively to carry out research, to explore the site, to develop a budget, to actually create the space, to evaluate its use, and to celebrate its presence (cited in Feldman, et al. 2006).

We are very familiar with the traditional model of discipline-based knowledge production in which research problems are conceptualized and studied through the academic interests of a specific group. This mode of knowledge production, called Mode 1 by Gibbons' group, emerged from a view of hard science in which activities and practices take place within an agreed upon paradigm. An emerging model for knowledge production, called Mode 2 by Gibbons and his group, emphasizes its "broader, transdisciplinary, social and

economic contexts” (Gibbons, et al. 1994, 1). In this materializing paradigm, knowledge is produced in a “context of application” that will likely extend outside the institution’s walls to take part in a network of knowledge sources and interested parties (1994, 3). Rather than being guided by the conventions of a particular discipline, problem solving is organized and carried out in response to a particular application. Such research typically crosses disciplinary boundaries, encourages new methods of knowledge production, and involves stakeholders as participants in research rather than as the subjects of research. Changes in research practices are having a ripple effect through the rest of the academy, creating tension around time-honored processes for evaluation research for promotion and tenure. The shift to Mode 2 research has certainly been driven by the rise in globalization and computing technology, but perhaps more important is an ongoing and multisided conversation about who can produce knowledge and about what constitutes expertise (Brukardt, et al. 2004, 11). Whereas the quality of traditional research has been determined by peer review, the quality of a Mode 2 project suggests additional considerations such as: “Will the solution . . . be competitive in the market? Will it be socially responsible?” (Gibbons, et al. 1994, 8). This expanded view of making knowledge has been a driving force for engaged universities as they imagine what might be gained by research embedded in transdisciplinary contexts.

Thus far I have argued for engaged research as transdisciplinary, participatory, and reciprocal. However, above all, engaged research is discursive; as the academic faculty member proceeds in collaboration with others, he or she constructs a representation of a situation through language. Indeed, such writings, or discursive representations, can be thought of, as “situated rhetorical performances” (Petraglia 2003, 163) that advocate for specific realities. Visionary thinker, Ernest Boyer, argued that universities should be seen as “staging grounds for action.” In his last talks, however, he elaborated his notion of engaged scholarship by underscoring the importance of language for taking action. He explained, “the scholarship of engagement also means creating a special climate in which the academic and civil cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other, helping to enlarge what anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes as the universe of human discourse and enriching the quality of life for all of us” (cited in Glassick 1999; See also Boyer 1990).

Most important, Boyer notes that it is the discourse, itself, that allows the making of knowledge to occur among the many stakeholders who work under the aegis of the engaged university. In this context for making knowledge, the rhetorical function of language is the critical commodity. Yet we must also acknowledge that the university does not own the production of knowledge. The university is only “one of many” knowledge centers and the relationships we establish with others must be “more fluid, more interactive, and more activist” (Walshok 1999, 85). The engaged university is defined by its communicative

potential and scholars, students, and community partners should see thick discourse at the center of their work.

This increased attention to discourse, often characterized as “the rhetorical turn,” is an established feature of scholarly work in the humanities, yet its lessons are quickly subsumed by the overwhelming belief that writing mirrors reality. Discipline-based scholars increasingly notice the ways that language constructs reality (Nelson, Megill, and McCloskey 1987). More important, this turn or return to rhetoric, has “rejected the conventional split between inquiry and advocacy,” pushing us to consider how guidelines for thick discourse can also become guidelines for action (Simons 1990, 4). Where advocacy was once seen as the province of the public and making knowledge was seen exclusively as the province of the university, the rhetorical turn brings the two together through writing. Writing, or discourse, can now be seen as critical and consequential rather than as, “writing it up,” or the final step in a research project. We will learn more about the possibilities of thick discourse not from ancient rhetoricians’ emphasis on invention, arrangement, and style, but from seeing rhetoric as an epistemic activity that concerns the ways that discourse makes meaning. Deirdre McCloskey called this perspective “Big Rhetoric” and has used this notion to argue for a more robust presence of rhetoric in the academy (1997). Even with calls for a greater emphasis on the role of rhetoric in the making of knowledge, language and rhetoric often function invisibly, obscured by the more tangible features of a university’s work—labs and classrooms, tests and tenure.

Composition scholar Charles Bazerman’s study of Thomas Edison illustrates the transformative value of discourse for institutions (1999). Contemporary universities have departments of electrical engineering, where research is conducted and knowledge, presumably, socially responsible knowledge, is produced. We would not have departments of electrical engineering without electricity. However, rather than focus on the particular scientific inventions, the “generators, meters, switches, and lamps,” Bazerman focuses on the way that Edison’s entrance to the scene constituted a discursive moment (1999, 333). He further argues that the success of a technological innovation must do more than accomplish a material change; it hinges on understanding the ways that symbols are circulated through language (335–336). Bazerman argues that incandescent lighting achieved value because of the “development of symbols that . . . give presence, meaning and value to a technological object or process within a discursive system” (335). As we rethink the role of the engaged university, our task is to consider how discourse lends value to research and knowledge, especially when the making of socially useful knowledge results from reciprocal activity with partners in government, communities, and businesses. We are not simply producing “generators, meters, switches, and lamps.” Together, the university and its partners produce a value system that surrounds these objects and that marks them as socially useful in some way. Bazerman’s research on Edison

reminds us that language, or discourse, seen as a system of practices, creates symbolic value in specific contexts.

Contemporary urban theorist Robert A. Beauregard provides a provocative example of how an epistemic view of rhetoric and an ethic of reciprocity and advocacy can drive the production of knowledge (1995). Beauregard explores the rhetorical practices employed to represent the city in a three-part series in the *New York Times* early in 1991 that subscribed to a tale of urban decay and objectified the city and its residents. He makes clear his perspective by announcing that

the city, of course, cannot tell us of its problems or its prospects, its successes or its failures. The city is not a speaking subject. Rather, it is the object of our discourse. We speak for the city; it is spoken about. (1991, 60)

The *New York Times* series presents an argument that shapes our view of urban cities as sites of decay that defy amelioration. The rhetorical strategies employed in the series of articles created a situation so dire and so emotionally fraught that the proposed solutions seem to dissipate into “resignation and despair” (67). The image of the city is then equated with wholesale civilization so that the decline of the city means the decline of civilization (65). The experts—sociologists, politicians, political scientists, and public policy types—produce a discourse that marginalizes and locates the poor “in a social space that few of us occupy” (67). The discussion is so devastating that it leaves the reader immobilized. The articles further suggest that solutions will lead us into economic recession and the resulting failure might either be familiar or novel, but, in any case, we will fail to solve the problem (88). Beauregard’s analysis of the articles deftly illustrates how poverty is defined in a social space quite apart from the readers and as such solutions seem impossible (67).

Rather than objectifying the problems of poverty through a rhetorically driven narrative of despair, Beauregard, as both faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh and community resident, constructs quite a different response, which he calls “collective action.” He tells the story of working with a group of community residents to mobilize against a vigilante nightclub that contributed not only to noise, but that also contributed to drug sales and other illegal activity. The residents, who had already begun organizing a neighborhood watch, worked through the city’s licensing bureau to have the club shut down. Beauregard details the work of this group and how they achieved a positive result through collective action. Interestingly, we do not know of Beauregard’s participation in this collective action until the last section of the chapter.

In the article’s coda, Beauregard announces his participation in the community activity. He titles this section, “Reflections,” to signal his reader that once

he has completed his academic analysis, he can become a participant of the collective action. He justifies his presentation in a footnote by citing Clifford Geertz's argument for "presence" as a way to legitimate narratives (1995, 78). Beaugard's discursive move, while cast as an apology—a reflective comment rather than an assertion, moves him toward engaged scholarship. The act of working with his community to shut down the club is activism and certainly could have been conducted outside of the university. However, the act of publishing a report of this effort and creating an analysis that illustrates how discourse works in two very different settings constitutes a scholarly contribution based on collaborative work. The reciprocal partnerships that made Beaugard's community participation possible also contributed to an alternate vision for a situation characterized by the *New York Times* in a discourse of urban decay.

As I argued earlier in response to Stanley Fish's definition of disciplinarity, the crucial feature of Beaugard's scholarship is his embeddedness in a community of practice. We can also characterize the context for Beaugard's work as a geo-rhetorical space. Postmodern geographer, Edward W. Soja, offers a way to understand the nature of this geo-rhetorical space through his notion of "thirdspace." Thirdspace is a site that honors the dynamic way that "lived space" connects discourse with location. Thirdspace, according to Soja, functions as a counterspace that can foreground a writer's lived experiences through the all-encompassing "relations of dominance, subordination, and resistance" that define each and every writing situation (1996, 68). Although Soja offers distinct definitions for first, second, and third spaces, his intent is to explore the complexity among these ways of thinking about social space. Drawing on the work of H. Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991), Soja proposes a "dialectically linked triad" that features thirdspace as a tool that can be used to reconstitute social spaces.

Firstspace. Firstspace, or perceived space, houses a spatial practice in which space is perceived, measured, and described. Information about space is presented as the process of human activity (1996, 66) For instance, geographers who map technology use in urban neighborhoods are functioning in firstspace.

Secondspace. Secondspace, or conceived space, offers representations of space where writers, artists, ethnographers, cultural theorists, urban planners, and other artist-scientists construct visionary interpretations, produce knowledge, and dominate through their design. While firstspace privileges "objectivity and materiality," (75) aimed at a formal science that can represent information, secondspace privileges "abstract mental concepts" through which, for instance, the good intentions of artists and architects will improve material reality (79).

Firstspace and secondspace are intertwined and define our ontology, that is, our ways of being. Soja argues that the ontological basis of first and second space has been privileged by a view of history that relies on time and narrativity to "make" the historical subject (173). Time defines how life was lived, how societies developed, and how human beings enter the future having accumulated

a collective past. In sharp contrast, space was treated as “something fixed, lifeless, immobile, a mere background or stage for the human drama” (169). Space, in this intellectual tradition, is seen as a container—the physical surrounding, environment, or context for being-in-the world (71). Thirdspace offers a way to counteract the illusion of reality presented by the overwhelming influence of time and historicity on the way we understand our participation in social contexts.

Thirdspace. Soja proposes thirdspace as a tool for an ontological rebalancing. Thirdspace, or lived space, forwards a political agenda “that gives special attention and particular contemporary relevance to the spaces of representation, to *lived space as a strategic location* from which to encompass, understand and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously” (68; Soja’s emphasis). Soja, who writes, in part, to broaden the disciplinary space allowed to geographers, offers a productive way, as well, to broaden the space allotted to first-year writing classes.

When engagement is defined as service, locations for service are seen as the perceived, natural spaces of *firstspace* and the sometimes the Utopian spaces of *secondspace*. When we value the lived experience of all participants—in and outside the university—who endeavor to make useful knowledge, we can connect discourse with location in *thirdspace*. Likewise, when this restructuring moves into first-year writing classes, the reified genres that constitute its *firstspace* and the interpretive analysis that constitute its *secondspace* will be transformed by the possibilities of *thirdspace*, where writing becomes a way to advocate for the options available in a lived space.

In the terms of Edward W. Soja’s *thirdspace*, Beauregard has created a rhetorical, lived space in which to enact change; this is different than studying poverty through a narrative that objectifies the poor as a marginalized “other.” Beauregard’s participation in the lived experience of the same marginalized poor that were objectified in the *Times* analysis provides a more dynamic notion of scholarship than allowed by self-contained disciplinary work. Of course, some might reasonably point out that Beauregard’s position as a tenured faculty member affords him privileges that his community-based colleagues don’t have. And, this example might be strengthened by an illustration of some written or spoken documents produced collaboratively by the community-based group. Even with these concerns, the example illustrates the difference that embeddedness can make in the use of language and discourse to construct what we know about poverty. This illustration, as important as it is, can help me make a further point that, I think, may be difficult to grasp. Beauregard, I’m sure, doesn’t think of himself as a teacher of first-year writing. Yet, as an engaged scholar, he has demonstrated how discourse analysis drove his critique of the *New York Times* piece. Further, and even more to the point, Beauregard, has much to say to undergraduate writing students about how his participation in the events he writes about demonstrates the ways that discourse drives engagement.

The New Learner Writes

The purpose of this section is to imagine what engaged scholarship means for student writing and learning. As university faculty across campuses engage more fully in partner-centered, reciprocal, and transdisciplinary research, rich opportunities for students open up. If the writing in the disciplines movement taught students the genres and the ways of knowing of particular disciplines, then engaged scholarship will provide a cross-disciplinary and even cross-institution approach to learning. Engaged scholarship is not the product of individual scholars working alone; it is not service; and it is not public work. As Barbara Holland says, it is a mode of teaching and research: “The scholarship of engagement and the idea of community partnerships are not about service. They are about extraordinary forms of teaching and research and what happens when they come together” (quoted in Brukardt et al. 2004, 2).

Following the work of Keith W. Hoskin, I call students who learn, along with faculty members, in the context of an engaged university “new learners.” My argument for a post-disciplinary approach to scholarship will benefit from a brief historical note on the relationship between disciplines and learning. Keith W. Hoskin, in “Education and the Genesis of Disciplinarity,” reminds us that the Latin *disciplina* is a “collapsed form of the *discipulina*, which means to get ‘learning’ (the *disci-* part) into ‘the child’ (the *puer* here represented in the *pu-* syllable in—*pulina*)” (1993, 297). The notion of discipline has always had these two functions: first, producing and disseminating knowledge and second, a concern for learning. Hoskin argues that the idea of disciplinarity began, surprisingly perhaps, through its educational function. Disciplinarity was born in the latter half of the eighteenth century through examinations, the numerical grading of those examinations, and interestingly, through the escalation of writing by and about students (Hoskin 1993, 272).

It was not oral examinations, which had been conducted since medieval times, but the insistence on written examinations and the concomitant surveillance and assessment of them that provided a foundation for the development of disciplines. A new “economy of knowledge” emerged in the German university, first, from the ranking of written work, which could now measure the inner value of the external performance. This focus on evaluation provided the starting place for a “credential society,” which could identify what Keith W. Hoskin calls the “new learners,” as proficient in some way. Second, and of particular interest for thinking about engaged scholarship, Hoskin argues that these new learners discovered that there was another side to the coin. Not only were students subjected to “disciplinary power” as they were evaluated on their exams, but also conversely, they, “discovered a new knowledge-power for themselves: a mirror power. . . . [that] imposed a systematically new way of constructing knowledge upon these new learners. In these new contexts for learning, students questioned, thought,

and literally wrote in a new register. As a result, they produced qualitatively new forms of knowledge” (1993, 274). It is hard to imagine what it felt like to be a learner in the late eighteenth century but Hoskin suggests that this time held a good deal of excitement. Writing, for these new learners, held a sense of discovery and a sense of participation that was lost as disciplines became formed, or as some say, naturalized.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, when, Hoskin claims, our current notion of disciplinarity was being formed, these writers, or new learners, produced what might be called “engaged scholarship.” As time went on, genres of writing and ways of learning would become reified into standardized texts and tests. But at this moment, these writers wrote in response to novel situations, taking into account the immediate rhetorical exigencies. This context for writing gave rise to both disciplines and to identities. We have the scientist with his equipment and the sociologist with his survey. But we also now have the student, whose identity in the context of university life, enacts a lively engagement with the work of writing and who, only later, becomes primarily the taker of graded examinations and the recipient of knowledge from pure disciplines. Understanding disciplines as Hoskin proposes, in this historical trajectory, helps us to imagine universities and disciplines as part of a particular time and a particular place.

Who are the new learners? What do they look like in the contemporary, metropolitan engaged university? An event at Princeton University in the late 1990s raises this question and the broader one of what constitutes engagement. When, in 1998, Princeton University hired controversial ethicist Peter Singer, their decision set off a campus debate that reverberated across the country. Student groups launched protests against what they understood as Singer’s support of euthanasia for severely disabled infants. Further, students accused Princeton of turning its back on its commitment to its community by ignoring the needs of the disabled. Princeton’s President, Harold Shapiro, countered that the university’s role is to ask the most difficult and penetrating questions we face about human life, framing these questions with rigor and integrity.⁶ But this principled debate did not occur. The standoff escalated, prompting an editorial writer for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to ask, “What’s the point of a university? . . . Is it only to cram a society’s settled opinions into the minds of young adults, to prepare them to ease smoothly into the workplace once they’ve snagged a diploma? Or is it also to spur those minds to become more agile and powerful, capable of challenging and improving upon the received wisdom, able to stretch the boundaries of theory and research?” (*Philadelphia Inquirer* 1999). While this event clearly raises questions about how a university can aspire to be *of* a community, I want to focus here on student learning. What might be the shape of the “agile minds” the editor argued for?

As the ripples widened, Judith Rodin, then president of the University of Pennsylvania and director of a commission aimed at improving public dialogue, stepped into the fray.⁷ Rodin argued that universities can participate, even lead, in this national quest to improve public discourse; they should be exemplars of a new kind of thoughtful civic engagement and robust public discourse⁸ (Rodin 2003, 233). Rodin suggested strongly that students learn to participate in debates about important issues like the one that surrounded the Singer hire. Certainly an ability to participate in deliberative discourse, in public debate and argument, is an important academic skill and one that needs honing. Learning how to argue and debate in a public forum has always been a valued academic skill. Rodin suggests that service learning, too, should become a valued part of the academic landscape. What Rodin misses, as I illustrate below, is the importance of discourse use in service-learning contexts.

Rodin offered the work of a Penn geologist, chair of his department, who provided field-based experiences for his students as part of a service-learning course in environmental toxins. This faculty member asked students to work with families in low-income communities to assess the presence of lead in their homes and yards. I want to call to your attention an activity that Rodin mentioned only briefly: students designed brochures to be disseminated to neighborhood families (2003, 234). These student-written brochures, aimed at a community-based audience, I argue, contribute significantly to the agile minds (and agile bodies) we desire for our undergraduate students. Agile writers depend on a sense of active participation in solving important problems. The Penn geologist who asked his students to go beyond their research in environmental toxins to produce brochures understood the participatory and reciprocal nature of knowledge production.

It is important to realize that the geologist understood his students needed to learn how language functions in the production of knowledge. Designing and writing a brochure depends on a sophisticated understanding of how language works to shape reality. Students, who are adept only at school-based writing, face several challenges in this field-based context. On the one hand, the comfortable, well-practiced, classroom-based modes of argumentation and narrative are of little help. On the other hand, students' familiar template for the brochure—flashy visuals and minimal text packaged in a triple-fold format—makes it seem deceptively easy.

Writing the brochure requires, more than anything else, a sense of participation in a consequential situation. This is a new and complex experience for most students. Students must synthesize their general scientific knowledge and their community-based research with the particular needs of the community members who will read their brochures. Formal aspects of writing such as paragraph coherence, syntax, style, and punctuation are now connected to a consequential aim.

Students will need to consult with community organizations and field-test the document with its potential audience, but they also will need to consult with a teacher who provides disciplinary as well as rhetorical expertise. When Penn students design written and graphic materials for use in an ongoing public situation, they write as participants, performing rhetorically to produce language and genre out of, as Stanley Fish would say, “a coherent set of purposes.”

Educating Citizens to Write

In this section, I take a close look at a service-learning course at the University of California at Monterey Bay in which students undertake a complex writing project. I compare the Monterey Bay students’ writing with a certain kind of writing used commonly in service-learning courses called “reflection.” I learned about the service-learning class I describe below from *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (Colby, et al. 2003; see also Fish 2003), which, in the context of arguing that universities should teach moral responsibility—a premise I disagree with—also promotes a pedagogy called “structured reflection.” (See chapter 4 for a lengthy discussion of the reflection essay.) It is important to note that not all service-learning programs focus on moral development. Most, in fact, understand service learning as a way not only to prepare students for participation in contemporary society, but also as a pedagogy that connects disciplinary knowledge to applications outside the classroom.

Educating Citizens offers a manifesto for the engaged university, arguing that all types of colleges and universities can promote a mission of moral education through civic engagement. Structured reflection is the method for preparing undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility. As I read *Educating Citizens* and followed its descriptions of service-learning activities, in which structured reflection was central, I noticed several classroom projects that seemed to be doing something closer to what I was after; students were using writing to shape reality rather than report to the teacher on what was learned. Let’s take a close look at one of them.

Two faculty members at California State University, Monterey Bay, teamed up to teach a service-learning course for upper-level earth science majors that filled their undergraduate requirement for California history and democratic participation. Gerald Shenk, a historian, and David Takacs, in earth systems science and environmental policy, wanted students to “see history as a tool they can use to understand and shape the world they live in” (Colby et al. 2003, 160). For their major project, and for 75 percent of their grade, students were required to produce a written document call the “HIPPP,” or, “Historically Informed Political Project.” To complete this project, students identified an