When I was eight years old, my family moved from a development of attached, two-family rented “garden apartments” to a private, single-family home in a middle-class neighborhood. In our earlier home, which faced a court strewn with children, my friends and I knew each other’s parents by their first names. In my new home, my mother immediately admonished me when I familiarly addressed my next-door neighbor’s mother as “Ann.” “That’s Mrs. Isserlis to you!” she said, invoking a fictive past in which calling someone by her first name had always signalled impudence. Reciprocally, my friend Robin and every other kid on the block called my mother “Mrs. Malinowitz”—clearly a huge waste of time. Who else but a teacher—who wasn’t a person, anyway—would we speak to in such a clunky and dishonest way? Politely forming the words “Mrs. Isserlis,” I felt a bit like Leave it to Beaver’s Eddie Haskell, whose obsequiousness subtly mocked (and irritated) the authority figures it ostensibly deferred to.

The adults, I noticed, continued to address each other as they always had. I also noticed, however, that though most of them called the women who cleaned their houses “Jessie” and “Ava” (when they spoke of them to one another, it was often “the girl”), the maids addressed them as “Mr. ___” or “Mrs. ___,” and my father referred to the super in the housing project that he managed as “Cornish.” (“Cornish” sounded like an adjective of approximation to me, and I had to ask before I understood that this was a man’s last name.) At school, our teachers all called us by our first names—except the one who cultivated a paramilitary atmosphere in her fifth-grade classroom. My brother told me that once when he was daydreaming, she suddenly barked out, “Malinowitz, Stan!” and he, confused, stood up.

Given this spectrum of possibilities, it was something of a “literacy event” to discover that people who were famous (a state presumably striven for) were reduced to unprefaced last names—even in the world of print. “Isn’t it President Kennedy?” I asked my mother. I knew she would say that to me it was—but why were all these adults who didn’t know him so brash? Others who represented the highest echelons of achievement—Salk, Koufax, Hemingway, Beethoven—were similarly ossified by a public which thereby claimed them as cultural property. There were definite exceptions: anyone who owed his fame to a following of children, such as Dr. Seuss or Captain Kangaroo, kept his title, and
of course there was the strange case of the pope. Years later, Spiro Agnew would be called (in toto) a “household word.” But as I realized in high school, these were people whose fame clocked in at about fifteen minutes compared to the timelessness of the greats—Marx, Freud, Kafka—who had been utterly thingified. (My brother reassured me that one day my own thinking would be similarly preserved by the ideology of Malinowism.)

Cut to graduate school, the world of composition and rhetoric. Plato and Aristotle, like the pope, were of course universally recognizable one-name commodities (were these their first names or their last names?—in any case, unlike the pope, they needed no roman numerals to distinguish them); but even a few contemporary theorists had achieved name brand status, allowing the rest of us to have ideas that were Foucauldian or Derridian. Then there were the compositionists, known to hardly anyone outside our own little pond, but luminous and stately nonetheless as they walked off the ark two-by-two, joined seemingly since birth at the last name: Lunsford and Ede, Knoblauch and Brannon, Flower and Hayes, Bartholomae and Petrosky. Until we novices went to our first conferences and glimpsed these theorists in the flesh, their paired names functioned mostly as flashcards triggering thematic associations: Collaboration Itself; The Better Way of Modern Rhetoric; Protocol Analysis; The Importance of Academic Discourse. Churning out the papers and exams that constituted our rites of passage, we feasted on these people, our parentheses chewing them to sustain our wobbly new assertions which, no matter how bland, seemed to require the endorsement of a Higher Power. Here’s an example of what I call the “slavish” approach to academic writing: “Writing is a process (Flower and Hayes).” (Only slightly less patently absurd, after all, than “The sky is blue [Local Meteorologist].”) Yet that parenthetical citation seemed to make everything OK, to confer legitimacy on our ideas (as well as our non-ideas), the way years earlier a doctor’s note brought to school meant that we really were sick. Flower and Hayes had stuck their feet in the wet cement of the Great Paradigm Shift, and now it seemed that any of us could begin to acquire a composition identity just by standing in those hallowed footprints.

It wasn’t, however, only with veneration that we invoked the names of composition theorists. As we grew acculturated to the combative milieu of academic discourse and started to take ourselves more seriously, we began also to argue, sometimes quite energetically, with the experts—much as they did with each other in the journals to which we were now subscribing. The articles I read in these journals seemed generally to be written on the premise that authors were dead and that theoretical diatribes, therefore, took aim only at unfeeling written artifacts. Yet these polemics often took ad hominem forms, even if only covertly. For instance, someone might write, “It is naive to think that . . . ,” and though it was technically only by virtue of one’s relation to a particular thought that one would be branded naïve, I couldn’t help imagining the actual or implied author who had inspired this statement hanging his or her head in shame. (It also seemed to me that “naiveté” was a quality disproportionately attributed to women. The
David and Me 211

cartoonish image of a gushing schoolmarm whose erotic energy had been tragically sublimated into an obsession with correct grammar—her hair pulled back in a bun, a bow tied on her polyester blouse, a public television tote bag hanging from the crook of her elbow—would often spring to my mind.) As if by some suspension of disbelief, the presumed audience of these professional articles seemed to be everyone in the field except the Other Author who was being "read critically" (and in the third person); yet the writer and all of us readers knew that the Other Author was liable to suddenly appear, ghost-like, in the "Comment and Response" section of the journal some months ahead. This knowledge itself, I would argue, was a specter hovering over, and informing, these entire acts of composition.

I'm not trying to be moralistic here. I joined in this practice with great gusto. Besides, the field of composition is basically a very civilized one. I would certainly say that, postmodernity notwithstanding, much professional composition discourse is permeated by a sense of rationality and fairness. Assertions are generally garnished with responsible amounts of support, illuminating anecdotes, conscientious accounts of opposing views, and gentle but firm explanations of why those opposing views are wrong-headed. Compositionists seem like people who would never spank their children, but rather would persuade them, through their inexorable logic, that it is time to go to bed. Still, though we attempt to maintain decorum at all times, we all have bones to pick, ideologies to expose. We take great care not to sound mean-spirited, our liberality demands that we remain tolerant of a wide range of ideas (at least, all those not repugnant to civil society)—but our aggression finds legitimized release, nonetheless, in the sports-play of collegial parley.

While I was a graduate student, I read the work of David Bartholomae. At first, I mixed him up with Donald Barthelme. Sometimes I mistakenly said "Bartholomew." Finally, I got him straight: he was simply Bartholomae—not a person but a position, a representation, a body of thought, a force-field in relation to which I could establish my own identity by choosing alignment, skepticism, or repudiation. As with other theorists, I could "follow" him or "use" him, or else I could "argue" with him in my work. In my dissertation, I argued with Bartholomae. It was a pleasure to argue with him, since he didn't respond to anything I said. I critiqued his well-known position on academic discourse, which found its apotheosis in his essay "Inventing the University":

[Bartholomae] fashions the university as an induction center in which the civilian languages of the students' home communities are shed and the uniform of academic language is donned. . . . Bartholomae's language at times suggests a militaristic imperative regarding students' surrendering of old discursive paradigms and appropriation of new ones—the student has to invent, has to learn (emphases mine)—creating a sense of tremendous authority on the part of the institution, and a corresponding relinquishing of authority on the part of the recruits who enter.

At the time that I wrote this, my sense of the power imbalance between Bartholomae and myself was especially acute: he was older, male, tenured,
heterosexual, presumably Christian, unambiguously identified with what he forthrightly called the "privileged discourse" of the academy, and—most importantly—was well-known, appearing in my life and in the lives of others I knew only in the authoritative incarnation of print. I was younger (I'm not sure how much), female, a graduate student in my thirties in a diminishing job market, an out lesbian, Jewish, partly in love with the academy but also furious at the privilege it sustained and strongly identified with the lives and ideas it excluded, and—most importantly—unknown to any colleagues except those who encountered me in the very ordinary, vulnerable, daily incarnation of a human body shlepping a backpack full of books to class.

My academic writing, as well as the rest of my life, was infused with my longtime involvement with feminist, left, and queer politics; the rhetorical stance itself that I assumed in my dissertation was shaped by these involvements. In radical politics, anger is frequently perceived as an ideal, in the sense that it affords a bulwark against the temptations of accommodation and conciliation. These are dangerous temptations because a movement needs to bolster its self-identity in the face of forces with the weight of social convention behind them—forces which are always threatening to exploit doubt and empathy as signs of weakness within the ranks. Proselytes and separatists within movements, particularly movements rooted in identity politics, are usually the most stalwart proponents of consolidating anger. Their belief is that fortifying the borders around debased subjects will prevent their energy from bleeding out of the group into the hands of the oppressor. But anger can provide at least occasional sustenance for bearers of all sorts of ideologies and temperaments who are engaged in political projects, and it is ritually enlisted as a means of stirring people to action. At political demonstrations, fists are waved, drums are banged, fierce resolve is laid out like an ultimatum ("What do we want? Peace! When do we want it? Now!"). We feel justified vocalizing blatantly not-nice things about people—as in the anti-Gulf War march chant, "Send George Bush! Send Dan Quayle! Send Neil Bush when he gets out of jail!" We are not respectful. We are insubordinate, iconoclastic. The low debase the high. We are carnivalesque.

By loudly articulating our anger, we also make ourselves intelligible to those one-name entities who will otherwise fail to note our existence, to whom we are only masses of insignificant particles. The civil rights movement made employers read carefully the resumes of racial minority job applicants. Rainbow Curriculum advocates in New York City prompted school board, media, and government officials to contend with gay and lesbian existence. Cesar Chavez's unionists—and the consumers who kept grapes off their tables—forced supermarket executives to think about farm workers. Peasants in Nicaragua and El Salvador caused U.S. Congressional aid allocations to come under widespread public scrutiny. AIDS activists got even those mighty one-namers, Reagan and, a day later, Bush, to finally utter the word "AIDS" in 1987—six years into the epidemic.

In a similar vein, I perceived myself as entitled to (and perhaps even courting virtue by) my brimming anger with Bartholomae and his enthralment with
privilege—which in my reading was underwritten by his uncontested claim to privilege. I saw myself as making an important choice in refusing to consolidate my own academic identity around the powerful, the world of the fathers. Maybe, instead of being a dutiful daughter of the academy, I could be a mouse that roared. I certainly experienced my authorial subject-position as mouse-like; and I certainly hoped to undermine Bartholomae's position as (in my view) the arbiter of what sorts of knowledge and discourse the academy could contain and what it could expel, of which people would be designated as knowers and players and which as hapless wannabes who wouldn't or couldn't “get” the rules into their heads. I quoted Bartholomae:

It may very well be that some students will need to learn to crudely mimic the “distinctive register” of academic discourse before they are prepared to actually and legitimately do the work of the discourse, and before they are sophisticated enough with the refinements of tone and gesture to do it with grace or elegance. (79; qtd. from “Inventing” 162)

The clinical, dispassionate prescriptiveness in Bartholomae's tone chilled and unnerved me; it reminded me of a male doctor who brusquely informs his patient that she “will need to have a hysterectomy.” (I imagined the same doctor, on the other hand, suffering a tremor of identification in having to inform a male patient that castration would be the order of the day.) Besides that, Bartholomae's edict was dripping with class condescension. What was all this about students having to develop “refinements of tone and gesture,” “grace” and “elegance”? Was this finishing school? Would he talk about developing “sophistication” in any discourse that way, or only one associated with social (even more than economic) power? In other words, I didn't buy the idea that Bartholomae was speaking metaphorically. It seemed that he really wanted to instill the accoutrements of pedigree in the badly bred. Yet what did he know about these people to whom he was playing Henry Higgins—about their desires as well as their lives? It was galling to me that he didn't seem in any sense charmed by, or even knowledgeable about, who his students were; he was charmed and knowledgeable only about who he could make them be (that is, more like him). I wrote in my dissertation:

Is there any realm in which Bartholomae lacks authority? What might he learn from examining what happens to him there? Does he necessarily mimic the behavior or discourse of insiders in every community he enters? Might he value his own discourse so much that he might choose in those situations to remain on the margin, finding it a more rewarding or even powerful place? Might he undergo a kind of mental split, faking the alien discourse for the moment but remaining conscious that he is performing only to achieve particular ends? How does he decide what those ends are, whether they are worth it, how far he will go with the project, what alternative strategies exist? What might he lose in such a situation? How would he feel? What would he learn from reflecting upon all of these choices, from self-consciously manipulating all these variables? Perhaps most important—and most absent from Bartholomae's discussion—what larger social and political structures might he discover serve to bolster the privilege and authority of his own academic discourse community, and in what ways has he come to rely on that support in his daily discoursing? (80)
It’s amazing what a distillation of one’s thought appears on the written page, how the mental schema which give rise to an articulated idea become invisible in the scene of writing. “Invisible” because, like film actors, written words are surrounded by a complex and crucial apparatus that hovers just outside the composition of a frame. Behind and around this passage, my schema second-guessed Bartholomae’s schema. Referring repeatedly to a discourse that is “privileged” in the academy, a “specialized” discourse (135,139), he seemed on the surface of things to mean that which was foregrounded or favored within a particular context—in this case, the academic context. Therefore, he could suggest that the kind of student he most admired—the student whose “ability to imagine privilege enabled writing” (153), the one who “continually audits and pushes against a language that would render him ‘like everyone else’ and mimics the language and interpretive systems of the privileged community” (157)—was one who simply possessed rhetorical savvy, who could “carry off the bluff” (135) of academic writing. It is certainly understandable why a scholar of rhetoric might appreciate that sort of talent. But this use of the word “privilege” was shadowed uncannily by another one, one that never actually declared itself and whose intangible density thus took on a hallucinatory quality. This “privilege” had to do with social status and power; this privileged discourse was spoken by people from privileged families who were reared in privileged neighborhoods, sent to privileged prep schools, and whom basic writers strove to be like because they were enrolled in privileged courses that led to privileged careers. By spooking the grounded “privilege” of foreground with the phantasmal “privilege” of power and prestige, Bartholomae managed to say what he didn’t say.

It was to the spectral discourse floating above the apparent one, or perhaps to the stunning conflation of the two, that I addressed my reply. I wanted to sever the connection between the different senses of “privilege” so that Bartholomae’s half-hidden agenda would be revealed—perhaps most of all to himself. I wanted him to have to acknowledge that he didn’t admire just anyone who could adapt rhetorically to the discourse that happened to be privileged just anywhere. He only admired those with enough savoir faire to cultivate for themselves the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie. I wanted to resituate Bartholomae someplace that would force him to take stock of his own assumptions. I guess you could say I wanted to teach Bartholomae a lesson.

So I imagined him in a scenario as I wrote. First the background: My partner Sara, who performs lesbian standup comedy that I largely write, got what turned out to be a horrible booking at a very divey women’s bar in New Jersey. (The prior week’s entertainment had been lesbian mud wrestling.) The drunken patrons were clearly uninterested in the ironic social, political, and personal commentary that comprises the majority of the act. Though Sara struggled valiantly along onstage to earn her fee and be gone, their chatter blotted out our carefully crafted lines—until one woman happened to catch a reference to “my lover, Harriet.” “Did ya hear what she said?” the woman screamed, pointing to her companion beside her. “She said ‘Harriet’! Your name is ‘Harriet’!” This fact elicited much appreciative laughter from other friends of Harriet.
In my mind, Bartholomae got a flat tire driving through New Jersey on his way to a conference. He managed to steer his car off the highway exit ramp and through a few rainy streets of a godforsaken town until he happily spotted the lights of the bar. Ready for convivial talk over a beer as he waited for AAA, he found himself instead ignored. The bouncer had grudgingly let him in to use the phone, but once he had placed his call, he began to feel distinctly uncomfortable. First of all, he was quite clearly not a dyke. Whether or not he had any pool-playing ability—a skill that might have helped to break the ice, give him an edge with the insiders—was a moot point, since nobody was going to allow him near the pool table, much less into a game. Besides all that, in his fastidious keynote clothes, he was—well, just not butch enough.

Of course, this fantasy worked on the farfetched presumption that Bartholomae would yearn for inclusion, even briefly, in this milieu. In reality, even if he were snowed in there for a month, I strongly doubt that he would try to “crudely mimic the ‘distinctive register’” of the crowd, or attempt to adopt “the commonplaces, set phrases, rituals and gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory concessions and necessary connections that determine ‘what might be said’” (“Inventing” 146). I don’t think he would invent the working-class lesbian bar for himself. I imagine that he would behave cordially, accommodating the rules of the place in whatever ways were necessary, keeping his bemused ethnographic observations to himself.

I have another scenario into which I insert Bartholomae that might be trickier. Colin, Sara’s brother-in-law, a self-made millionaire who lives in an affluent suburb of New York City, commented recently that the students at his son’s high school—students who go on to some of the best colleges in the country, and many of whom become business majors—don’t respect their teachers, because the teachers drive to school in 17-year-old cars while the kids arrive in late-model Porsches. The way he told the story, it was clear that Colin, too, regarded the teachers as a bunch of sorry role models. In my view, it is unlikely that the majority of the youth of his town will ever yearn for validity within the academic discourse community that Bartholomae loves, or even make a sincere attempt to mimic its surface features. But what would Bartholomae have said had he been sitting in the coffee shop while Colin expounded upon the abjection of educators? Would he have been tempted (as I was) to remark that these were unsurprising perceptions for suburban philistines, and derive satisfaction from watching Colin squirm as he tried to figure out what he meant? Whether he spoke or not, wouldn’t he quickly mentally reinvert the hierarchy of value so that the academy regained its place on top? I ask because this is a question that Bartholomae’s work always seems to beg: how does the academy get privileged as the very site of privilege? If most people in a democracy are far less smitten with it than we are, if to them Oz rests within some altogether different territory, haven’t we failed somehow to invent ourselves as citizens of this land if we refuse to comprehend that basic fact?
As I read over the paragraph that I just wrote, I notice an interesting slippage: I start out vilifying Bartholomae, but I end up identifying with him. "He" becomes "we." That was a problem I had as I wrote about Bartholomae in my dissertation to begin with. I found him arrogant, elitist, able to sustain the posture he assumed only by insulating himself from vast social realities both external and internal to the academy—and yet I always found him interesting. And one of the things that always interested me about him was his desire that everyone else—students, particularly—be interesting. I appreciated his impatience with student essays that advanced good-enough analyses locked in the interminable inevitability of predictable cultural narratives. While everybody claimed to disdain these sorts of essays, I thought Bartholomae most compellingly analyzed them as failed instances of an enterprise that was always by nature performative; he also best described student writers' frequent failure to recognize their own cutting edge and use it as a jumping-off point for writing. And he saw that one's own cutting edge was an ever-receding horizon. Chasing this horizon was the whole project of writing, with all its attendant bursts of adrenaline and leaving-behind of time zones that one had already traversed. As someone who related to writing very passionately, even obsessively, I was moved by those predilections of Bartholomae's that suggested he might be a fellow-traveler. For these, I could almost love him.

But that would be David Bartholomae, not Bartholomae. I was getting caught up in sentimentality, letting go of my anger when I needed to conserve it. The power imbalances between us were still vast, signifying even larger social inequities. For one thing, while he wanted students to invent the university, I wanted the university to reinvent itself so that students could embark upon such Freirian projects as discovering why white men like him had invented it to begin with. In that sense, I saw him as a kind of oligarch, myself as a guerrilla staked out in the mountains. But besides that, he was operating out of the superior position of being a thing, while I quivered with all the vulnerabilities of personhood. David might have been a Thou; Bartholomae was simply an It, a purely textual persona—inanimate, insensible, a force to be pummeled without human consequence. In feminist psychoanalytic theorist Jessica Benjamin's words, there was between us no "intersubjective reality, where subject meets subject" ("Desire" 98). How could there be? Bartholomae and I had never met each other. And we never would—except perhaps if I ever metamorphosed into Malinowtiz, the two of us finally squaring off on the public page. Benjamin writes:

A person comes to feel that "I am the doer who does, I am the author of my acts," by being with another person who recognizes her acts, her feelings, her intentions, her existence, her independence. Recognition is the essential response, the constant companion of assertion. The subject declares, "I am, I do," and then waits for the response, "You are, you have done." Recognition is, thus, reflexive; it includes not only the other's confirming response, but also how we find ourselves in that response. (Bonds 21)
What permitted me to annihilate David in Bartholomae's discourse wasn't just the fact that he didn't recognize me. It was the fact that in not recognizing me, he could not recognize me recognizing him. Thus, for me, he had no claim to humanity. My gaze simply bounced back at me off the page; my response mechanically reverted to its point of origin like an e-mail message sent to the wrong address.

My resentment and my imperviousness to the David in Bartholomae became further complicated as I revised my dissertation for publication. This time, Bartholomae might receive my message. I began to worry about the terms in which I couched my argument. When I mentioned to my editor that I actually respected certain things about Bartholomae very much, he encouraged me to write about them in the book. But when I went back to the manuscript, one thing really had nothing to do with the other. Was it actually true that one point of writing a text for public dissemination was to be nice? How come Bartholomae's task was to write about ideas, mine to spread good feelings? Thinking about it that way reignited in me the indignation of the social underdog and an old feminist sense of outrage that women, even in acts of writing, were expected to nurture the whole world. In the end, I lifted that section of the book virtually intact from the dissertation.

In this case, however, my principled resolve served as a smokescreen for my continuing uncertainty about whether I had done the right thing. Graduate school had sharpened my sense of the ethical as an indeterminate and contextually contingent matter, and now I could almost die from the number of moral frameworks within which I could locate my decision. Depending on how I viewed it, I could see myself as anything from noble and militantly heroic to vicious and destructive. Jessica Benjamin also has this to say:

> Beginning in the breakdown of the tension between self and other, domination proceeds through the alternate paths of identifying with or submitting to powerful others who personify the fantasy of omnipotence. For the person who takes this route to establishing his own power, there is an absence where the other should be. The void is filled with fantasy material in which the other appears so dangerous or so weak—or both—that he threatens the self and must be controlled. A vicious cycle begins: the more the other is subjugated, the less he is experienced as a human subject and the more distance or violence the self must deploy against him. (Bonds 220)

Is Benjamin only referring to the ways that those in hegemonic positions subjugate subaltern peoples whose perceived power is feared and must be controlled—as, in the view of feminist psychoanalytic theorists Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, men fear and suppress women as a result of woman's primordial power over them as infants and the continuing threat of being bound in identification? Or is she suggesting that repressing the spirits of subaltern peoples may induce them to return in ways that are monstrous even for the subaltern themselves? Apparently, she means the latter, for she writes:

> The role of the “other,” which for so many is their only moral refuge and political hope, is no less complicated. The subjugated, whose acts and integrity are granted no
recognition, may, even in the very act of emancipation, remain in love with the ideal of power that has been denied to them. Though they may reject the master's right to domination over them, they nevertheless do not reject his personification of power. They simply reverse the terms and claim his rights as theirs. (Bonds 220)

Or, as David Mura says, “[O]ne must learn first how liberating anger feels, then how intoxicating, then how damaging, and in each of these stages, the reason for these feelings must be admitted and accurately described” (149). Or as Audre Lorde said, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (123). Or as Harold Bloom never said, maybe women writers also slay their fathers. Or as Benjamin’s terms reverberate frighteningly for me: maybe instead of being Angela Davis I was really more like Mark David Chapman.

Having reached this dramatic crescendo, let me qualify it: yes, I fetishized David Bartholomae, but not extraordinarily or pathologically so. As he himself would probably grant, a certain amount of fetishization is endemic to anyone’s passage through graduate school and on to the professional academic discourse community. As I suggested earlier, it’s through a peculiar process of commodification and introjection that the canonized writers in a field become the graduate student’s training wheels. I certainly never had any desire to assassinate Bartholomae; my self-portraiture here is hyperbolic. (Such reliance on hyperbole is nothing new in the world of writing theory; try reading Derrida on the “violence” of language while riding the New York subway during a week when women are pushed off platforms onto tracks and token booths are torched.) Brent Staples, in his memoir Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White, goes much further in his revelations of fetishization when he describes stalking Saul Bellow while a graduate student at the University of Chicago. Staples is consumed with envy for Bellow’s luck, talent, and fame as well as with rage at his novelistic depictions of black men. He reads Bellow’s books, searches for him in crowds, and periodically checks to see whether Bellow’s name is still on the bell of his apartment building. “I wanted something from him,” he writes. “The longing was deep, but I couldn’t place it then. It would take years for me to realize what it was. I wanted to steal the essence of him, to absorb it right into my bones” (229). Yet he also wonders, “What would I do when I caught him? Perhaps I’d lift him bodily and pin him against a wall. Perhaps I’d corner him on the stairs and take up questions about ‘pork chops’ and ‘crazy buffaloes’ and barbarous black pickpockets. I wanted to trophy his fear” (228). Graphic as it is, Staples’s, too, is a hyperbolized pathology; just as he takes wry pleasure in frequenting paths with dark shadows so that he can observe the terror his mere presence evokes in white couples, his fantasy of Bellow lampoons the deviance that successful white writers have easily ascribed to black masculinity.

My interest here is not in the graduate-student-as-maniac. From hyperbole, however, one can glean some insight into the ways that we eradicate those of whom we write from what Walter Ong has famously called the larger “fiction” we construct of our audience, and how this becomes a routine act of dehumanization. When Brent Staples prepared his manuscript for publication, how did
he think about Saul Bellow reading it? As a character in Staples' book, Bellow was cast as hero and villain, literary god and sidewalk mortal, predator and intended victim. How do such depictions, proffered as if direct from Staples' heated imagination, allow for such potentialities as, say, Staples (as a successful memoirist) being seated beside Bellow on a panel at a literary event or encountering Bellow at a cocktail party or on an award jury or after a guest lecture at his alma mater—or Staples (as an editor of The New York Times Book Review) conferring with Bellow over some copy? As far as I can tell, they don't. Staples takes the rhetorical stance of one who has never and will never come into face-to-face contact with Saul Bellow. Rather, he deliberately utilizes a medium—writing—whose very organization of discursive space inherently forgives what in speech would emerge as deranged or, at the very least, rude commentary. Seizing the power that Bellow-the-writer has enjoyed—that is, by becoming a writer himself—Staples reciprocally (though with actual knowledge of Bellow, while Bellow has had none of him) realizes Ong's notion that while a writer casts his audience in a role of his own choosing, "the audience must correspondingly fictionalize itself" (12). In other words, because Staples is writing to an audience in which Bellow ostensibly does not exist as a reader, Bellow-the-reader must construct himself as a non-person—or at least, as non-Bellow.

It seems to me that what Staples and I have in common is the willful alienation of one specific reader, though our acts are camouflaged and our integrity preserved by our ritual invocation of that collectivity known as "audience." Yet that alienation is never complete; each of us, by bifurcating our subject into the two senses of that word—"topic" ("It") and "human being" ("Thou")—has to suffer the ghostly return of the one as, even in its latency, it inflects the other. The suppressed knowledge that our subject (topic) is a subject (human) who does constitute part of our audience is, rather than an absence, a presence within the rhetorical economy of our writing acts. And in some form, all of us—professional academic writers and students alike—rely on such acts of suppression as we compose. Often it is not a particular individual who is negated, but instead a whole category of individuals (such as queers, Arabs, welfare mothers, alcoholics; or, often in politically assertive counter-moves, men, whites, straights, etc.) whose membership in an audience is implicitly denied within the very discourse that describes them. Such erasure is not simply an oversight; it actually functions as a rhetorical prerequisite or enabler for many acts of writing. If a discourse's appeal to pathos acknowledges that its debased and objectified subject (topic) is actually constituted of subjects (people) who are qualified to be appropriately cognizant readers of the discourse, then the very premises upon which the discourse stakes itself risk becoming undone. For instance, if in writing my dissertation/book I had kept alive in my consciousness the idea that David was not exterior to Bartholomae, if I had suggested that the edifice signified by Bartholomae contained within it the moral depth, conceptual flexibility, and basic sensitivity needed to comprehend my argument, I would have had no argument.
The capacity of debased/effaced (human) subjects to haunt the terrain upon which they have been vaporized has been suggested by various authors, including Toni Morrison, Edward Said, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and, most explicitly, Terry Castle. In her book, *The Apparitional Lesbian*, Castle explores "the very ghostliness—the seeming ineffability" of love between women as an archetype pervading literary depictions of lesbians. Castle writes:

Given the threat that sexual love between women inevitably poses to the workings of patriarchal arrangement, it has often been felt necessary to deny the carnal bravada of lesbian existence. The hoary misogynist challenge, "But what do lesbians do?" insinuates as much: This cannot be. There is no place for this. It is perhaps not so surprising that at least until around 1900 lesbianism manifests itself in the Western literary imagination primarily as an absence, as chimera or amor impossibilia—a kind of love that, by definition, cannot exist. Even when "there" . . . it is "not there"; inhabiting only a recessive, indeterminate, misted-over space in the collective literary psyche. . . . [I]t is reduced to a ghost effect: to ambiguity and taboo. It cannot be perceived, except apparitionally. (30-31)

Castle uses Freud's theory of "recognition through negation" to explain why "the metaphor [of the spectral figure of the lesbian] has functioned as the necessary psychological and rhetorical means for objectifying—and ultimately embracing—that which otherwise could not be acknowledged" (60). According to Freud, "Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed" (667). It is according to this logic that, for example, an important figure in one's psychic life can appear in a dream under the guise of someone else: it is, paradoxically, only through the articulated denial of this association on the part of the dreamer, when narrating the dream, that the figure in the dream becomes intelligible to the analyst. Another example of an act of negation intimating an affirmation can be found in "the familiar superstition that boasting is dangerous. 'How nice not to have had one of my headaches for so long.' But this is in fact the first announcement of an attack, of whose approach the subject is already sensible, although he is as yet unwilling to believe it" (Freud 667). For Castle, this theory suggests a new way of looking at the "negation" of lesbians in literature (and concomitantly, in other forms of public discourse). On the one hand, acts of negating lesbian existence may have been intended as movements toward eliminating its threatening presence. But the very gestures that purported to erase lesbians from textual visibility also ironically signalled their existence via a "ghosting" effect. As ghosts, lesbians have roamed widely through literary texts and haunted resisting readers: "To become an apparition was also to become endlessly capable of 'appearing' . . . If it is true that the first stage of recognition is denial, then the denial of lesbianism—through its fateful association with the spectral—was also the first stage of its cultural recognition" (63).

Castle, like Morrison in *Playing in the Dark*, Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, and Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet*, is concerned chiefly with verifying the ghost-sighting and recuperating for readers the effect of the ghost upon the
landscape which ostensibly does not contain it. All these writers have charted
the ways in which the effacement of particular peoples—African-Americans,
subjects of colonial empires, homosexuals—as agents in Western literary
production has produced a false exorcism, the presence of the very act of their
erasure reverberating within and essentially haunting Western literary con­
sciousness. My concern here is similar, but different, in that I am more concerned
with recuperating those same ghost-effects for the edification of the writers who
have produced them in the first place. In other words, I am suggesting that it may
be both rhetorically and politically useful for writers to become conscious of
how, through their acts of negation, they perversely invoke material in the very
same stroke by which they expel it from the nucleus of a discourse. What is
invoked may appear in apparitional, dream-like form; but as the writer Delmore
Schwartz has said, in dreams begin responsibilities.

For members of a community of professionals who regularly write about
one another (particularly insofar as we write about writing), it seems important
that we extend our consideration of subjectivity from a focus on the writer to a
deeper look at how we as writers treat the subjectivity of our—well, subjects, in
the doubled sense of the word. By denying its doubled sense—that is, by insisting
that we are writing only about the representation of ideas, and not about those
who have represented them—we create the gothic conditions under which
allegedly dead authors rise up as ghosts. As popular children’s culture has shown
us, there are friendly as well as vengeful ghosts, so this eventuality isn’t
necessarily an ominous one. It may always be, though, an instructive one, one
that can help us to be more aware of the complicated meanings and functions of
audience as we work with our students. Douglas B. Park, in his important essay
“The Meanings of Audience,” remarks that discussions with some of his students
who have worked in collaborative classrooms “suggest that their awareness of
specific critical readers not sympathetic to the rhetorical situation they wish to
create—readers who will not readily become their audience—can be inhibiting
and complicates rather than simplifies the problem of dealing with audience”
(240). I agree that reckoning with the subjectivities of human readers rather than
with the fuzzy invented artifact of audience makes the writing act more difficult,
and writers may legitimately choose to avoid such chaotic proceedings by
appealing to the fixed collective entity that best suits their needs. Yet there is
heuristic value in a writer’s being challenged to wonder whether certain readers
are resistant to a discourse because in some disturbing sense, perhaps one not at
all apparent to the writer, they find themselves in it. Often we admonish students
to keep in mind, out of a sense of fairness, characteristics of audience members
that may not be obvious when they write: “Remember, a [lesbian or gay man/
person with a hidden disability/person of Jewish or Native American descent/
etc.] may actually be in this class as part of your audience.” It is harder, though,
for us to discuss the ways that writers choose to not know what they know
because the admission of such knowledge can thwart an entire discursive
enterprise. Morrison, Said, and Sedgwick have demonstrated that such not-
knowing has been fundamental to Western cultural production. I am not offering the utopian suggestion that we all simply cease textual suppression of whoever our Other of the moment happens to be. I am only suggesting that we further complicate our students' and our own thinking about audience by considering the ways in which our subjects come back to haunt us when we relegate them to the mythic exterior of a discourse—and the ways that the notion that all of our audience is always a fiction is itself a convenient fiction.

I'd like to conclude with a story about my own haunting. While my book was in press a couple of years ago, my dilemma about my discussion of Bartholomae still niggling in my head, I attended a conference in which he was one of two speakers at a large session. The experimental format of the conference asked that the audience break into discussion groups, and that a leader representing each group report back to the entire room for one minute at the end. Dutifully trying to summarize my group's conversation, I nonetheless inadvertently fell back on my own perspectives and language during my sixty seconds at the podium. I remember that (though I hadn't thought of it in these terms before, then or ever) I explained that though we had been asked to discuss the presentations of both speakers, our group's discussion had been distinctly "Bartholomaic." There was some laughter, and I suddenly became uncomfortably aware of Bartholomae's presence just a few rows in front of me. Afterward, as I was leaving the room with some friends, he approached me at the door. What he said was something like, "I was interested in what you said; I'd like to continue the conversation." What I said was something like, "Sure, that would be nice." Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my friends slip away with ironic backward glances; my real world receded, and in its place I stood there with Bartholomae, feeling as funny as the Mia Farrow character did in The Purple Rose of Cairo when the fictional character stepped out of the movie and began to talk to her. I was actually glad he'd come over and said what he did; he seemed like a nice person. Still, it was very hard not to laugh—just as it had been when I'd been the forewoman of a jury and, reenacting a Hollywood scene I'd watched hundreds of times, I'd had to stand up and deliver a verdict. It's stressful trying to relate to people and situations you know are fictional as if they really exist. Anyway, I never had that conversation with Bartholomae; I wasn't ready for it.

But now there is one more thing I'd like to say:
Hello, David.

Notes
I would like to thank Bronwyn Jones for her very helpful response, under madcap circumstances, to an earlier draft of this essay.
Works Cited


A Reminder

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