Between Conventions and Critical Thinking: The Concept of "Limit-Situations" in Critical Literacy and Pedagogy.

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In Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness, Patricia Bizzell charts the changes in her relationship with the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire. In her earlier work, she argued that there is a "causal" link between Freire's idea of critical consciousness and teaching academic discourse while, in her later work, she explicitly rejects her previous advocacy that Composition Studies focus on academic discourse conventions. In the revision of her position, Bizzell questions Freire's concept of critical consciousness; she wonders whether or not "'critical consciousness,' as I learned it from Paulo Freire, is indeed what I want to be accomplishing with my teaching" ("Patricia" 51). Bizzell, it seems, wants on the one hand, to break from Freire's notion of critical thinking while, on the other hand, to "save a liberatory educational project for [her]self" (51). In this essay I will argue that Bizzell's reasons for rejecting Freire's concept of critical consciousness are problematic, not because I wish to dispute Bizzell's claim, which I believe to be correct—that is, that academic discourse is not causally linked to critical consciousness—but I intend to show that Freire's concept of critical consciousness is grounded in a view of truth as a processual disclosure of "limit-situations" of concrete historical and social practices. In other words, I wish to demonstrate that Freire has a view of truth as the critical disclosure of limit-situations that is outside of both Bizzell's earlier social constructionist intellectual framework and the later framework that she calls "postmodern skepticism" (Academic Discourse 283-88). In addition, I will use Mark Mathabane's Kaffir Boy and African Women: Three Generations as examples of the generative and "ec-static" structure of critical consciousness in order to illustrate Freire's concept of truth as an event that is only produced in a limit-situation, in both its enabling and constraining aspects. I will demonstrate how Mathabane shows the ways authentic knowledge is generated not by passively accepting the knowledge of his community; rather, authentic knowledge is gained by problematizing his community's discourse conventions.

At the outset of this discussion, it is important to recognize that Freire's idea of critical consciousness relies upon the disclosive theory of truth, a theory he developed by focusing upon Karl Jaspers' notion of the "limit-situation" and interpreting it, not through Jaspers' rationalist and neo-Kantian understanding of truth, but rather
through Martin Heidegger's disclosive theory of truth. The problem of truth plays a complex and central role in Jaspers' *Philosophy of Existence*. In the chapter "Truth," Jaspers claims that there is a "multiplicity of truth" (36); the three modes of truth "are in no sense an unrelated aggregate. They are in conflict: in possible reciprocal assaults upon each other. Each truth falls into untruth when it violates the integrity of its own meaning and comes to be dependent upon and distorted by another truth" (his emphasis; 41). But, despite Jaspers' exposition of truth as a multiplicity of possible modes, he remains an enlightenment rationalist who believes in a universal Truth that can never be wholly realized nor "actually present" (44). Through the "authority" of the rationality, he claims, "truth is neither exclusively universal knowledge nor exclusively external command nor exclusively idea of the whole, but all of these at once" (47). It should be noted that Freire accepts Jaspers' concept of the limit-situation, yet rejects Jaspers' view of truth.

Jaspers defines limit-situations as "situations that we cannot evade or change... In our day-to-day lives we often evade them, by closing our eyes and living as if they did not exist" (emphasis added; Way 20). Freire's notion of critical thinking depends on his revision of Jaspers' concept of the "limit-situation," a revision of the ideal limit-situation that centers around his processual and disclosive concept of truth. As Jaspers states, submersion in the limit-situation covers up or evades by pretending that the situation does not exist. For both Jaspers and Freire, there is a withdrawal from authentic being when an individual refuses to confront a limit-situation; however, as Jaspers says, when we confront a limit-situation "we become ourselves by a change in consciousness of being" (Way 20). In "Education as the Practice of Freedom," Freire delineates two basic modes of being in a limit-situation: one, integration, contributes to the arrival of truth as a projective disclosure, in other words, integration is a humanizing process; while the other, adaption, contributes to the process of truth's withdrawal, in other words, adaption is a dehumanizing process: "Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical ability to make choices and to transform that reality" (his emphasis; 4).

Critical consciousness is an event and not the attainment of an objective, stable, or fixed "state of mind"; critical consciousness intervenes in the passive acceptance of the everyday understanding of "reality" that an individual has of ways of being-in-the-world. I would argue that Freire interprets humanization through Heidegger's concept of Da-sein. In Heidegger's concept of Da-sein, human being occurs as a process of standing out, or ec-stasis from the enrobing social practices into which one is "thrown": "Da-sein's Selfhood has been defined formally as a *way of existing*, and therefore not as an entity present-at-hand. For the most part I *myself* am not the 'who' of Da-sein; the they-self is its 'who'" (his emphasis; Being 312). Da-sein is "lost in the 'they, it must first find itself" (his emphasis; Being 313). The "they-self" that provides the "who" of Da-sein is concealment; Da-sein's possibilities-of-being are withdrawn unless Da-sein can raise its self to unconcealment through affective self-finding. As Michael J. Hyde suggests, human beings dwell rhetorically through rhetoric's most primordial function: the "making-known" of being ("Rhetorically" 201) which discloses the modes of human existence through articulated self-understanding.
The event of unconcealment occurs through the integration of affective self-finding into one’s temporality, one’s historical and kairotic moment. For Freire, the historical factuality of the human situation “give[s] meaning to geographic space, by creating culture” (“Education” 5); emerging from the situational pressures to adapt to “the choices of others” is protectively disclosive in that it creates and recreates ways of being-in-the-world; integration discloses the practices of an integrated and incarnated thinker, as well as a disclosure of truth that can only occur within a critical consciousness. Freire argues that truth is a processual disclosure that can only occur as an event. truth is an event of ec-stasis of critical understanding or critical consciousness which allows a human being to stand-out from his or her submersion in a limit-situation.

Victor Villanueva Jr., outlines how Freire’s concepts of critical consciousness and limit-situation are integrated into the activity of adult literacy work: “The way to arrive at critical consciousness, for Freire, is through generative themes. Generative themes are critical assessments of limit-situations, the myths that maintain the status quo” (his emphasis; 54). Critical consciousness occurs when a human being stands out, or emerges from her “submersion of consciousness” in the veiled myths of the status quo; critical consciousness is a reflective action that does not represent or mirror any state or essential quality except for an unending process which never yields a finalized consciousness or fully humanized human being; instead, it yields a specific and concrete “critical intervention in reality” (his emphasis; Pedagogy of the Oppressed, hereafter PO62). Freire’s use of culture circles starts with the discussion of “situations”; these various situations are developed in order to generate themes of inquiry. For example, “the normal situation of a man [sic] as a being in the world and with the world, as a creative and recreative being who, through work, constantly alters reality” (“Education” 63). This particular generative situation allows the tutees to make projective disclosures that critically revise a conventional, static and passive view that a worker would have of ‘work.’ The new critical ability discloses both the conventional wisdom about work in general and it helps to problematize the tutee’s particular relationship to the activity of work. A generative theme such as ‘work’ creates a context both for the tutee to stand-out from his or her everyday conception of the world and for a disclosive projection of new possibilities of relations between their everyday practices and their world. The generative theme creates the kairotic moment from which an ec-stasis from adaptive behavior to integrative behavior can occur.

In order to exemplify the generative and “ec-static” structure of Freire’s concept of truth as an event that is only produced in a limit-situation-in both its enabling and constraining aspects—it will be helpful to analyze Mark Mathabane’s autobiographical narrative Kaffir Boy. Mathabane argues that “authentic” knowledge is generated not by passively accepting the knowledge of his community; rather, authentic knowledge is gained by problematizing his community’s discourse conventions. Ec-stasis is the event of disclosure that occurs when a human disclosively projects new possibilities of being upon his or her environing social practices that seem to constitute the natural” ways of existing in that particular situation; linguistically each projection is disclosure of incarnate discourse, of dialogic activity that emerges from
the background of anonymous and anterior social practices. Incarnate discourse articulates the intelligibility of social practices and calls one back from the "lostness" of the realm of public everyday understanding, what Heidegger calls the "they-self."

There are pressures that Mathabane describes in his youth under the apartheid system's oppressive pass laws, unending hunger that borders on starvation, and the dehumanizing brutality that exists within the racially separated townships of South Africa. However, perhaps the most important pressure that he faces is the crushing "confusion, helplessness, hopelessness... and cynical attitude toward people...[that] seemed to lurk everywhere about and inside me" (Boy 67). The environing social practices, of course created by the apartheid system, conditions an anonymous background of passive "lamb-like submission"; most of the docile behavior exhibits a kind of "narrowness" of crowds of people who "seem to share nothing in common, except poverty and suffering" (87). Mathabane states, "But all of this I passively accepted as a way of life, for I knew no other. The house, the yard, the neighborhood and Alexandra were the hub of my experience. They constituted the only world I knew, the only reality" (96). Passive acceptance of the concrete situation constitutes his experience, his reality, the "world." As Freire states, "unfortunately, what happens to a greater or lesser degree in the various 'worlds' into which the world is divided is that the ordinary person is crushed, diminished, converted to a spectator, maneuvered by the myths which powerful social forces have created" ("Education" 6).

In order to articulate the intelligibility of social practices and forces that make up his experience, Mathabane must stand-out from the social expectations, the normal submissive acceptance of hopelessness of what "they" understand as a transparent, unchangeable and static social order. Mathabane is lost in the embodied thought of the "they" or as Freire would say, "submerged" in an atemporal realm of limit situations, adapting rather than emerging and being "temporalized" ("Education" 4). Mathabane describes the ways that the social pressure of the "they" comes from not only from the anonymous background social practices but also from the tribal ideology of his father: "My father told me to believe and not to ask questions, for to question what he believed was a sign of insubordination and disrespect" (102). The expectation to be passive and docile in his behavior comes from multiple sources, but there is a problem posing effort made by Mathabane to integrate himself as an active shaper and reshaper of his potentiality-for-being: "I felt I could not just sit back and let them order my mind and shape my life as they saw fit, without my asking questions; that somehow I had to seek my own answers to the complex life around me" (102). Mathabane's questioning of his limit-situation makes the transparent become visible; his projection of new possibilities is a process of humanization that occurs through the ec-static emerging from, and refusal to adapt to, the anonymous social pressure of the "they."

Yet, ec-stasis is a process that contains a paradoxical movement, or event-structure. It is both a revealing and concealing of a human's being. In other words, there is a concomitant and immediate moment when an individual articulates his or her understanding of a limit-situation, when human being is revealed in the act of articulating living discourse; at the same moment that living discourse is projected into
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the social world; however, in this moment of projective disclosure, discourse “falls” back into the vast environment of previous codifications, of the already said, as petrified discourse; consequently, it becomes concealed or embodied discourse. Incarnated discourse—which upon utterance, or as it is projected and enters into the environment of anonymous anterior discourses—becomes petrified or embodied discourse. Dialogical and critical inquiry reanimates, or re-humanizes embodied discourse, transforming it, for as long as the inquiry lasts, back into incarnate discourses. The movement of the covering up or concealment of truth which occurs in embodied thought and discourse occurs often as Mathabane begins to ask difficult political questions that his parents cannot or would not answer.

The slow unveiling of apartheid as a political system occurs to Mathabane during conversations with his mother. His mother asks why he thinks it is possible to one day own a house when it’s “against the law for black people to own houses” (Boy 93). In another passage he asks her: “What are equal rights, Mama?” (Boy 157). Mathabane projects a future, and his temporalization of possible ways of life discloses to him the “fact that the white people made all the laws, ran the country alone”; this fact “had not yet entered my mind” (Boy 93). But, once he does open this line of questioning it leads to other fundamental questions, such as, “Why?” His mother refuses to allow this line of questions and erects a wall of resistance to cover up, to push back Mathabane’s attempt to emerge from the anonymous “they.” She either cuts off dialogic inquiry, “Now stop asking questions” (Boy 158) or she answers in ways that are designed “to deny me access to the things I wanted to know. Perhaps it was stubbornness which made me persist asking questions I knew could not be answered, phrasing them differently each time” (Boy 94). These “unanswered questions” form a reservoir of the unsayable which was itself a sign to Mathabane of “their significance” (94). The resolve to continue to ask these questions acts as a counter-thrust to the withdrawing quality of discourse. By asking questions Mathabane counters the closed and finalized sense of a limit-situation, which as Heidegger states, is the predominate characteristic of the “they-Self” (Being 346); the everyday ways of understanding close off the announcement of futurity by “converting” the affective self-finding of one who asks questions to a docile “spectator” (Freire; “Education” 7). The resolve to ask questions transforms the “closed-off” situation of the ‘they’ through Mathabane involvement in disclosing the limits of his situation. For Freire and Heidegger, situations are not spatial; rather, as Mathabane’s resolute involvement with self-understanding demonstrates, situations are determined by taking action, asking questions, re-creating the situation into which he has been thrown.

In order to develop the argument regarding my definition of Freirean critical consciousness as the process of projective disclosure of limit-situations, I would like to begin my discussion by examining Bizzell’s claim that Freire’s pedagogy has a serious theoretical “flaw.” Bizzell recognizes that her claim “that academic discourse and critical consciousness are causally linked” (“Patricia” 51) has a flaw in it and gives it up; but, the problem is that in the disavowal of her thesis she lays the blame for its problematic nature at Freire’s intellectual doorstep, implying that the flaw in her thesis is caused by Freire’s definition of critical consciousness. Her reasons for giving up
the claim of a causal link between teaching academic discourse and its relationship to Freire’s idea of critical consciousness thus deserves examination.

Bizzell’s claim consists of two assertions about Freire’s concept of critical consciousness. First, Bizzell argues that Freire’s concept of critical consciousness is based upon an epistemological error and that she had incorporated the error into her thesis; second she claims that Freire’s concept of critical consciousness is based upon what philosophers call a “correspondence” theory of truth. Her first assertion suggests that Freire has a faulty concept of how knowledge is formed and passed from teacher to student. She contends not only that Freire’s epistemology includes a “method,” but also that he believes that his method is “value free.” Bizzell claims, “My objection to Freire came to be precisely that he pretended his critical literacy methods merely point out truths in reality for students to discover—that is, that his methods were strictly objective and value-free (emphasis added; Academic Discourse 21).” Bizzell’s assertion is that Freire is a positivist and holds an instrumentalist view of pedagogy. Bizzell’s assertion that Freire’s pedagogical practices are instrumentalist and objectivist is, given Freire’s epistemology, simply impossible; it is Bizzell and not Freire who claims that his pedagogy is a “value-neutral tool of academic discourse” (Academic Discourse 283); Freire never makes such a claim. As C.H. Knoblauch points out, Freire opposes rather than promotes an “objective and value-free” epistemology. Knoblauch argues that Freire “opposes... objectivist inquiry and static historicism.... Objectivist research turns human beings and their life-worlds into sterile models and statistical averages” (“Some” 51-2). Knoblauch is critical of the claim that Freire has an “outmoded epistemology”: “Freire is plain enough... about the interpretative nature of knowledge, the provisional character of our understanding of things, the importance of negotiating our renderings of ‘objective reality’” (“A Response” 408-09).

Freire stresses that objectivity is an epistemological position that does violence to his holistic conception of the subject/object relationship by emphasizing, “We recognize the indisputable unity between subjectivity and objectivity in the act of knowing. Reality is never just simply the objective datum, the concrete fact, but is also men’s [sic] perception of it.... subjectivism and objectivism come into play when the subjective-objective unity is broken” (“Adult Literacy” 51). In fact, in The Pedagogy of Hope (hereafter as PH) Freire answers the charge of objectivism directly. He writes:

One of these judgments, which is from the 1970’s, is one that takes me precisely for what I criticize and combat...this type of criticism, when made of me, and therefore based on a distorted understanding of conscientizacao and a profoundly naive view of educational practice—as it seeks to regard that practice as a “neutral” one...it is precisely the political nature of educational practice, its helplessness to be “neutral,” that requires of the educator his or her ethicalness. The task of educator would be all too easy were it to be reducible to the imparting of content that would not even need to be treated aseptically, and aseptically “transmitted.” (emphasis added” 77)

Freire notes the irony of the accusation, that he is accused of the very thing that his pedagogy is designed to dismantle: the claim that there can be objective and ahistorical educational content. An Objectivist pedagogy is an instrumental view of education and claims that content can be aseptically transferred from a teacher to her
students by teaching “skills.” But, as Stanley Aronowitz states in “Paulo Freire’s Radical Democratic Humanism,” Freire advocates an educational practice that is not instrumental, but one that, instead, is meant “to offer a system in which the locus of the learning process is shifted from the teacher to the student” (8-9). For Freire, the ethical shift in the learning process is the re-cognition, the rethinking of educational practice to include a focus on a student’s potentiality-for-being; in other words, his prime educational value is “humanization.”

Furthermore, Bizzell’s assertion that Freire operates from a pretense to a “strictly objective and value-free” pedagogy obviates much of his explication of the process of humanization; for example, in the opening line of Pedagogy of the Oppressed he states: “While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind’s central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern” (P025). Freire begins his book with a discussion of the axiological context of all pedagogy. Humanization, which is the dominant value of critical consciousness and pedagogy, is not an objective, static, and pre-existing essence; rather, humanization is a value that is always ‘in process’ because it occurs only in the ongoing efforts of human beings who themselves are always in process: “both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompleteness” (P025).

Freire complicates the issue of humanization as a value through his discussion of the dehumanization inherent in the “Banking” style of education. In the Banking style of pedagogy a teacher narrates static truths; a teacher’s narration contains the dominant discourse and values (P02). The narrative character of the Banking style of education transforms humanization into dehumanization; it transforms a human being’s living dialogic potentiality-for-being, which is incarnated in authentic discourse, into “lifeless and petrified” narrated discourse; narrated discourse, which is embodied in the social world as “objective” and transparent knowledge, forecloses the context where words and texts become incarnated through “perceptual activity” (Literacy 30). In other words, humanization occurs in the process of learning because of the ongoing inquiry on the part of the student—incarnating the event structure, the activity of truth, and not the transfer of information, transforms narrated and embodied discourse into incarnated discourse. However, it is not a binary of either/or that distinguishes narrated from incarnated discourse; rather, it is the process of transformation from one mode of discourse to another, the oscillation between modes, that is central to Freire’s concept of the subject/object unity and his holistic approach to reality. This process of transformation, which occurs in pedagogical practices, is also central to his concept of the limit-situation, which occurs in social practices.

Equally important and closely related to this first misinterpretation of Freire’s idea of critical thinking, is a second serious error in Bizzell’s interpretation of Freire: she claims that Freire’s concept of critical consciousness is based upon what philosophers call a “correspondence” theory of truth. In other words, Bizzell claims that Freire’s concept of critical consciousness is based on a theory of truth, which assumes that truth exists “in reality” and that truth can be accurately represented in
correct and valid assertions. Furthermore, Bizzell claims that Freire believes that his “method,” which is based on objectivist assumptions, makes an adequate between a critical interpretation of “reality” and the self-identical essence, presence, or being of a determined “reality.”

Bizzell identifies two reasons for the shift in her thinking: one is that there is a causal link between teaching academic discourse and the students’ achievement of a critical consciousness; the other is that she has shifted her conception of truth from the idea that knowledge is created through the consensus of an interpretative community and that meaning is created by adopting the codes and conventions of the speech community to “anti-foundationalism.” Anti-foundationalism is “a philosophical position which holds that there are no absolute grounds of truth ... all ‘truth’ is contingent, provisional, subject to establishment and change by rhetorical means” (Academic Discourse 26). However, Bizzell’s conception of various philosophical positions regarding the nature of truth seems to be limited to an either/or understanding: either one holds an Objectivist correspondence theory of truth like that of E.D. Hirsch or one is, as she calls herself, a “postmodern skeptic” (Academic Discourse 284, 286, and 288). Bizzell claims that Hirsch’s type of Objectivist or “philosophical orientation” dominates English studies (Academic Discourse 260): this “philosophical orientation” as she defines it “has its origins in a search for truth. This truth is supposed to exist independent of human beings on a plane beyond the material and temporal. Humans do not make truth, they discover it” (Academic Discourse 260).

The problem with Bizzell’s espousal of “postmodern skepticism” is that her collapsing of this complex philosophical problem into a simple binary does not obviate other theories of truth (such as the Coherence, Pragmatic, Performative, Semantic or Disclosivist theories), some of which do not share the foundationalist or representationalist assumptions of objectivist epistemology. Bizzell collapses all theories of truth into a binary dualism so that any reference to the truth must imply a “foundational” theory. This is very problematical even when it comes to Bizzell’s favored philosopher, Richard Rorty. Rorty’s work thematizes the “problem” of truth from a non-representationalist point of view. His version of neo-Pragmatism “offers no ‘theory of truth’” (“Pragmatism” 128). Rorty states that “the pragmatist does not have a theory of truth, much less a relativistic one” (“Solidarity” 24) because he or she thinks that it is a concept that is used to justify and explain systems of representation. Although Rorty would agree with Bizzell that there is no “transcendent truth” (Academic Discourse 260), his critique allows for Donald Davidson’s Coherence theory of truth. Rorty does not make the claim that any assertion of truth value is a necessary claim to Foundationalism, as does Bizzell; in fact, Rorty as a self-proclaimed neo-Pragmatist, follows a very specific framework that does recognize truth as a viable, yet nontranscendent concept.8

Bizzell’s sweeping condemnation collapses all theories of truth into a false and binary opposition where anyone who argues for a concept of truth is called a foundationalist and a follower of Hirsch. Bizzell’s misinterpretation of Freire’s concept of truth which is, like Rorty’s, staunchly anti-foundationalist and non-representationalist, is predicated upon this false binary. According to Bizzell’s
interpretation, Freire is both an Idealist and an Objectivist; he “believes that human beings can ‘detach themselves from the world’; that when they ‘enter into’ social reality from this detached perspective, the ‘true interrelations’ they will discover” are injustice and the ability to critique oppressive social conditions (Academic Discourse 19). Thus, Bizzell makes these two assertions in order to claim that Freire’s epistemology posits that the truth can be discovered as a static correspondence between a correct interpretation and an unchanging reality. Her disavowal of Freirean pedagogy therefore contains two significant errors: that Freire’s idea of critical consciousness has an objectivist “methodology” and that Freire argues for a correspondence theory of truth.

Obviously, like Bizzell, I think that it is important to have “a liberatory educational project,” and I would argue that one way to do so is to “retrieve” one of Freire’s most important and holistic concepts: the limit-situation. Freire’s conception of the limit situation precludes a correspondence theory, which in its most fundamental assumptions, is a representationalist view of truth. Rather than a correspondence between a static picture of reality and the real “thing-in-itself,” Freire posits a dynamic, processual, and non-representationalist view of truth. Contrary to Bizzell’s claim, if we examine Freire’s concept of the limit-situation we can understand his Disclosivist notion of truth, which is based upon the processual and incarnate event structure of events of truth which emerge from particular kairotic situations. For Freire, truth has a concomitant event structure which occurs in the moment when incarnated discourse, upon its articulation in a narrative form, becomes transformed into embodied discourse. For Freire, the projective disclosure of truth is not an object; it is the event of affective self-finding within the sets of social practices, ones discloses ways to let oneself and others and new possibilities for existing to oneself and others. This activity is the truth of humanization; truth is a verb, a verbalization of new potentials-for-being human.

Critical consciousness stands in a direct relationship to Freire’s concept of the limit-situation and the transformation of living discourse into embodied discourse. For Freire, “acts of knowing” (“Adult Literacy” 55)—that participate in the process of reinventing particular historical situations that concomitantly enable and limit potential new acts of humanization—constitute critical literacy. Failure to enter into the critical process allows the embodied discourses of social conventions to remain veiled, static, unauthentic, and “false” (Literacy 66). Freire’s idea of what is false or untrue is dependent upon the intertwining of integration and adaption to social practices and discourse formations. The process of “unveiling reality,” or un concealing the embodied and narrated discourses occurs with a dialogic interrogation—often begun through explorations of the affective meaning of “generative words” —that allows knowledge to be incarnated in a living and dialogic discourse of inquiry.

For Freire, one lives both in the truth and in the untruth; the transformation from a false to a true discourse does not presuppose an object that can be rationally or empirically revealed through a regulative set of standard procedures or a “method.” The term “method” is used by objectivists and representationalists, who are often proponents of “skills” based pedagogics, because they claim their method is universal
Rather, Freire's view is that there is conflict inherent in limit-situations between untruth, when one adapts to a situation and truth, when one integrates a critical consciousness into a situation. Each particular limit-situation allows for exactly the opposite of a methodological set of rules to reveal "the truth" or "the untruth" of a situation. Once the situation is dialogized through incarnate discourse, it generates an "emergence," or an ecstatic standing out from the uncritical adapting to sets of conditions to an integration of affective-self-understanding of the "world" (Literacy 68). Freire means that when one "emerges" from a limit-situation there is a re-cognition, a re-conceptualization of values that were previously transparent or simply taken for granted as "true" and not, as Bizzell seems to indicate, an escape from cultural and historical contingencies. But each new disclosure, each "emergence" that un conceals concrete and real aspects, also is immediately delivered over from incarnate living discourse to discourse to embodied discourse as it enters the social realm of codifications and conventions of discourse. Just as Mathabane knew that the reservoir of un answered questions was indicative of significance, so Freire's concept of truth is processual and dialogic, structured by the ongoing projective disclosure of unthought and unspoken reservoir of truths that exist within each particular historical limit situation.

According to Freire, "Critical consciousness makes it possible for people to enter into the historical process as responsible subjects" (P0 18). A responsible subject emerges in an ecstatic and kairotic moment, into "the historical process" of time by "standing out" from its adaption to the "they" by engaging "in the constant problematizing of their existential situation" ("Adult Literacy" 56). Bizzell's critique overlooks Freire's contention that a subject is never separate from its existential limit situations: a subject is always already in and with its environing social world. Social and discourse conventions, on the one hand, enable a certain amount of critical consciousness; however, on the other hand, they also function to constrain critical consciousness in ways that conceal and dissemble: "aspects of their own existential experience [are] represented" in codifications, such as the "culture of silence," of "natural inferiority," or the passive-aggressive mode of pedagogy that Freire calls the "Banking style" of education. All of these codifications or ways of being-in-the-world are based upon "anterior" perceptions ("Adult Literacy" 53), or conventions. Whether they are academic discourse conventions or social conventions, those codified and anterior sets of discursive practices or ways of thinking are the context into which any subject is anonymously deposited.

Heidegger's concept of "fore-sight" is an important aid in thinking about Freire's concept of limit-situations. 10 As Heidegger has described it, Da-sein is "thrown," without choice or agency, into a particular and concrete historical situation from which, in order to be authentic, she or he must emerse. As we saw with Mathabane, the process of living authentically occurs only within the framework of his articulated self-understanding which then reveals the particular environment that she or he was thrown into; articulated self-understanding is an authentic ecstasis from the world of concealed modes of being-in-the-world. In other words, Mathabane is authentic only when he is uncovering and disclosing the unconcealed aspects of his environ-
ment. He must “return to its origins” of his particular limit-situation, questioning the order of apartheid, in order to retrieve what Heidegger calls “initial truth within its own limits” (Introduction 117). The retrieval of the “origins” of the environing world into which Mathabane was thrown is not a return to some “foundational essence” or some static and eternal truth; rather, it is a critical return that interrogates his position and its limits within his own environment. Mathabane demonstrates how the disclosive concept of truth is a process that is intimately related to Freire’s project of being fully human. “The essence of being is unconcealment” (Heidegger, Introduction 105) in each particular limit situation, without the movement towards humanization in the “there” of each particular limit-situation, there is no “being.”

Because Heidegger defines truth as revealing and concealing ways of being-in-the-world “the word ‘being’ has a strictly circumscribed meaning” (Introduction 117). Agency or freedom occurs only as an inquiry which critically reflects upon ways of being-in-the-world. Because no one person creates the patterns and practices of a community’s discourse conventions, a subject is anonymously immersed in that which appears as if it were transparent; only a dialogic inquiry into the meaning of its modes of being-in-the-world allows a subject to emerge as a visible figure from this transparent and anonymous background. Discourse conventions are the background into which a subject is deposited; not only are these ideas systems transparent, but also, their transparency seems to relieve a subject from the need to problematize his or her existential situation. As Heidegger states:

Being is only manifest through our self-understanding; understanding is a mode of disclosure of truth which is always the result of an ec-stasis from the anterior perspectives or ‘fore-sights’ that both constrain and enable understanding. As in Heidegger’s example, a clock’s nature is concealed from us unless we have knowledge of the specifics of how to “tell” time, measure time, or even recognize “time” as a concept; all these are necessary in advance, and constitute “fore-sight” (Introduction 117). In other words, a speech community’s knowledge is held in advance through discourse conventions; and, those conventions form a consensus that domesticates and disengages critical consciousness rather than inherently fostering a critical consciousness which could problematize the existential situation by bringing its limits into sight.

Critical inquiry is always based on the lived experience of the inquirer, but it also always involves the inquirer’s attempt to reach a new affective self-understanding of the commonplaces that constitute everyday understanding. These commonplaces, which are discursive in nature, are implicated in what we might call the paradoxical and historical structure of truth. The paradox of truth is that it is disclosed as a withdrawing arrival: in the very moment when truth reveals itself, it also withdraws
from authentic understanding and becomes another one of the commonplaces of
discourse. Bizzell’s original argument regarding discourse communities, that
conventions have a generative power, was not a new one to rhetorical theory; Aristotle
said that rhetorical commonplaces, conventions or commonplace understandings of
a community’s thought are the first location for any argument. However, rhetorical
commonplaces have an ideological force, which, as “places” that form in an initial
context for one’s argument, concomitantly limit and enable an individual’s under­
standing of her social situation. Social conventions transform dynamic and processual
disclosures of truth into static representations; social conventions generate what
Freire calls “limit situations” because they are static and veiled within an over­whelm­ing
background of local knowledge and practices.

In *African Women*, Mathabane describes the schools that both girls and boys are
sent to: young boys are taught to “always keep a woman in her place. Boys often
returned from mountain school circumcised and truncated into sexist tyrants. They
expected to dominate and command women, including their mothers” (211); young
girls learn “the crucial role women play in the family life. Most of the lessons, though,
boiled down to knowing how to be an obedient, subservient, compliant, and man­pleasing woman” (209). Mathabane demonstrates the role of tradition and social
conventions in constraining the role of women in the narrative of three generations
of his family. Mathabane interweaves the complex and often brutal power relations
which women are subjected to by “showing that little had changed from one
generation to another” (115). In his narrative, tribal customs, traditional gender roles
and oppressive social conventions are the reasons for the lack of change. Mathabane’s
grandmother, who is a member of the first generation, states that her life was “one
of continuous dependency and uncertainty. Custom had taught me to rely totally on
a husband, to expect to be take care of by him in return for my complete devotion.
It would take me a long time to overcome such dependency and ways of thinking”
(*African* 115).

The “internalization” of the local knowledge is perhaps best seen in the
experience of Mathabane’s sister, Flora, who is a member of the third generation of
women in his family. The reason I qualify the term ‘internalization’ is because she is
thrown into a situation where the external practices, through which gender is
understood in this community, are made a part of the self; so that this is not a
psychological process of an internal ‘self’ which chooses to identify with a particular
idea system. Rather, Flora adapts to the social conventions as practiced and
understood everyday and without critical reflection; it is the external world of the
anonymous “they” who provide a set of conventional rules that define womanhood.
She describes the female rites of passage which a typical woman “adapts” to become
a “perfect woman” of her tribe. “[T]eaching women about their role in traditional
society... only reinforced the inferior status of women in society” (213). Discourse
conventions are always limited and “inauthentic” because their meanings are
embedded within social formations that make them appear to be transparent; the ritual
school, designed to “make ideal wives,” functions to hold women in a
sort of invisible chain, riveted deep in the psyche, in their very being. It was as if a powerful fear had been installed in them, drummed in, a fear which told them that to be anything other than a dutiful wife, obedient of her husband’s will and forgetful of her own, was abnormal, unwomanly, a moral sin, and would be visited by all sorts of calamities and punishment. (206-7)

The consequence of valorizing and adapting to the status quo of discourse conventions is an inauthentic understanding that covers up the need for articulated understanding by discouraging new inquiry and dialogic interrogation.

However, discourse conventions do not exclusively generate inauthentic thinking; rather, they generate concomitantly inauthentic and authentic thinking. For Freire, a critical consciousness does not finalize or complete one’s responsibility as a subject; instead, it always both impedes and fosters the way an individual can become a “responsible subject.” Inauthentic thinking objectifies knowledge in a passive unquestioning acceptance of those things that a community’s members are “supposed to know”: authentic thinking is, as Freire states it, a recognition of the “unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality” (P065).

Implicit in Freire’s description of both the character of reality and of human beings as processual is the idea that knowledge is also processual. Knowledge and, consequently, its position in the social, cultural, and discursive formations is always limited by its historical position in the larger processes of cultural production. The critical power generated by either social or academic conventions is always already implicated in the suppression of critical inquiry.

A critique of the structures of thought that has framed knowledge is always necessary to reveal knowledge within its particular “limit-situation.” Freire describes a limit-situation this way: “Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other ‘in a situation’” (P090). For Freire, the meaning generated by social and discourse conventions is always limited and inauthentic because it is a kind of meaning that covers up the ideological roots of a situation. In effect, social conventions “name” the vast and anonymous network of cultural structures that are passively accepted as “reality.” Although, as Bizzell argues, discourse conventions encourage and sometimes even generate unique and inaccessible thoughts (Academic Discourse 91), the mastery of discourse conventions becomes important topos for rhetorical invention because they not only reveal or disclose new truths, but also because of how they dissemble and conceal truths.

In summary, we can say that discourse and social conventions do not generate what Freire considers to be “critical consciousness”; instead, they generate limit-situations. Limit-situations cannot be accepted passively as “givens,” either in terms of social or discourse conventions (P080). Rather, discourse and social conventions are structures which define the limits of a situation, and, according to Freire, must be “perceived by individuals as fetters, as obstacles to their liberation, these situations stand out in relief from the background, revealing their true nature” (emphasis added; P080). Because discourse conventions appear to be the way knowledge is transferred, knowledge is represented as static; authentic knowledge withdraws, becoming veiled within the overwhelming cover of background or commonplace knowledge. A
subject's "ec-static" relation, her standing out from the background commonplace knowledge, does not function as an objectification of her "reality," rather, such a standing-out exemplifies the generative and kairotic relationship that occurs when a subject emerges from her environment.

Mathabane argues that all of the contending value systems available to him under South African apartheid, each in their own way, work to contain, domesticate, and control his developing critical consciousness. Mathabane's interactions with the contending value systems available to him under South African apartheid demonstrate the way conventions work to contain and control his developing literacy. Whether the conventions are tribal customs, Christian beliefs, or apartheid regime's racist ideology, they all have a domesticating effect upon Mathabane. He is submerged in several contending limit-situations; he cannot "adjust" to any of them. As Freire states, limit situations can cover over authentic ec-stasis through "'existential weariness' and 'historical anesthesia'...[so that one is] unable to glimpse the 'untested feasibility' that lay beyond the 'limited situation' in which they found themselves immersed" (PH 137). Mathabane's exposition of his struggle against conventions allows us to understand critical thinking as the ec-stasis of the individual from his submersion in the limiting social conventions which form and structure an individual's reality.

For Freire, critical thinking begins the moment a person becomes conscious that he or she is "in a situation"; he states: "Only as this situation ceases to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality" (P 090) can a person emerge from that particular limit-situation. In Mathabane's autobiography such a moment occurs when his mother, Geli, converts from her traditional tribal ancestor worship to Christianity. When Geli converts she does so not only in defiance of the tribal religion, but also in defiance of the social conventions of patriarchy. Mathabane states that "she seemed no longer prepared to be ruled by my father, to play the role of a tribal wife who never dared assert her individuality." (Boy 77). Geli's conversion is motivated by a critical observation: "haven't you noticed," she says, to her husband, that "all the Christians have jobs" (Boy 77). Geli's conversion is what Mathabane calls a "Christianity of expediency"; while she calls herself a Christian "her tribal beliefs continued as strong as ever" (77). In other words, by imitating the discourse conventions of conversion, by proclaiming her Christianity through the set formulas of conversion experience narratives, she does not generate any real knowledge or commitment to be a Christian in any authentic sense, rather, we see that conforming to the discourse conventions of the Christian proclamation makes Geli a member of a new "speech community," but that membership alone does not give her authentic knowledge of "Christianity." What is interesting about Geli's initiation into the Christian speech community is not only that she cannot be reborn within a new discourse (she continues to carry her tribal vocabulary) but also that she is now infused with what Freire would call a generative set of complications.

The one generative complication I would like to examine is the way that her conversion produces an affective transformation in Mathabane's self-understanding of the tribal heritage of his family. Mathabane asserts: "I was opposed to both"
tribalism and Christianity. But, what occurs at this point in his life is that Mathabane begins to reflect upon his mother’s resolve to defy patriarchal domination of her father and become, at least nominally, Christian (Boy 77). By reflecting upon his mother’s conversion, Mathabane sees the ways that a speech community frames and limits knowledge. Geli is a repository of conventional tribal knowledge; her memory, Mathabane states, “is like a book that one can read over and over again” (70). Geli’s “stories served as a kind of library, a golden fountain of knowledge where we children learned” (79). One of the most important lessons of Geli’s stories is embodied within the way she leads her life: she sees the tribal stories as riddles to be grappled with, and, in the process of inquiry, she transforms the embodied knowledge of her tribe into incarnated truth, which is dialogically disclosed to Mathabane. The stories are not entertainment; their value arises from the processual movement of coming to see, feel, and think in new ways (78). For Mathabane, Geli’s effort to stand out from tribal beliefs is consonant with a reader-listener’s struggles to understand the various possibilities of meaning framed by the tribal stories.

However, Mathabane sees how Geli’s application of a critical hermeneutic sets her apart from her community of peers: “My mother’s sharply differing opinion was an exception rather than the rule among tribal women. Most times, many tribal women questioned her sanity in daring to question well-established mores” (Boy 132). Geli demonstrates the way that a speech community can enable an individual’s critical consciousness if an individual has models of inquiry that problematize conventions; the act of problematizing tribal customs initiates a search for ways that Geli can represent commonplace knowledge of her community in new ways. This is not initiation into a community of like minded peers, as the Social Constructionists like to say; but rather, an initiation into the habits of mind that lead to critical inquiry into those value laden areas that the Social Constructionists call social or discourse conventions and Freire calls “limit-situations.”

Mathabane highlights Geli’s problem-posing approach to tribal conventions by contrasting her transformational approach with his father’s view that tribal conventions are static and deterministic. Mathabane’s father, Jackson, is an example of what Freire means by “fatalism” (P 094); because fatalism is an idea that proposes history is “a given destiny,” (P 026) it destroys hope and faith in social and historical change. Jackson Mathabane can be said to be “caught up in and unable to separate” (P 094) himself from his limit-situation, a situation that breeds the codification of the “culture of silence,” one that Mathabane’s father attempts to force his son to internalize. Mathabane’s father feels trapped and unable to thematize or problematize his situation. “I was told by my father I had no free will, no control whatsoever over my destiny, that each minute detail about my life, my existence, before, now and to come” was controlled by my ancestors. “My father told me to believe and not ask questions, for to question what he believed was a sign of insubordination and disrespect” (Boy 102). Mathabane realizes that his father’s interpretation of tribal conventions is designed to produce passive and domesticated consciousness; the tribal values, as interpreted by his father, were there to “shape” his life and “order” his life in a fixed and determinate way. Mathabane’s father discourages him from asking questions in
order to protect the entrenched tribal values. With questions, says Mathabane, “there would most likely come answers different from my parents” (102). Questions that are problem-posing are a threat to the commonplace knowledge of a community.

Asking questions about the nature of tribalism proved threatening for Mathabane in another way. In his search for a new way of life that is outside of tribalism, Mathabane comes to realize that tribalism is used by the government in ways which both support and enable the apartheid system. Mathabane comes to see tribalism as a “thick veil” that covers the eyes, minds, and hearts of South Africans in an effort to manipulate black Africans’ desire for a return to the past (Boy 207). The Edenic impulse of tribalism (Boy 31-2; 133), the desire to one day recapture and reclaim the lost power of the African tribes, subverts critical questioning and action that could be directed at transforming the concrete historical and social situation of apartheid. This is, of course, exactly the intention of the Bantu Education laws and curriculum when they limit black African schools to the study of “tribal knowledge.” The only books allowed by the Bantu Education laws and curriculum are those written from “tribal points of view” (Boy 193). According to Dr. Verwoerd, the architect of the Bantu Education laws, “the native child must be taught subjects that will enable him to work with and among his people; therefore, there is no use misleading him by showing him the green pastures of European society” (193). The apartheid government uses tribalism in ways that produce a domesticating effect upon the “non-whites” of South Africa.

As I have suggested, the process of evaluating Geli’s challenge of tribal conventions leads Mathabane to “critical intervention” or a reevaluation of tribalism. Although Mathabane’s reflective action finally leads him to consider tribalism as a yoke which is added to the already heavy burden of apartheid, he also is able to realize that Geli’s transformative hermeneutic is a way of generating constructive contradictions. Yet, it is from within this constructive reading of conventions, which results when an individual like Geli generates authentic knowledge, that the action of a subject who thinks critically and enacts an authentic contribution to knowledge concomitantly risks alienation from the community; discensus is the basis of critical consciousness.

The disclosure of authentic knowledge comes not from remaining submerged in the limit-situation but from a subject’s emergence from the limit-situation through a critical dialogue that transforms commonplace knowledge by making it problematic. A problem poser emerges into critical consciousness by asking questions about the commonplaces of a community’s discourse, not by imitation of or initiation into a speech community. A concrete act of critical thinking is an act in which one concomitantly imitates or is initiated into a speech community but, paradoxically, at the same moment is an act that risks alienation from the community—yet, it is also an act that can and does disclose authentic knowledge which occurs in an event-structure that may be repeated. However, the occurrence of an act of critical thinking does not transform consciousness into a stable, static, or essentialized form of “critical consciousness.” Critical consciousness is a continual activity that problematizes every new variation of one’s situation. However, the
problem posing habit of thought always entails a risk that one will become alienated from one’s community. As Henry Giroux states:

Critical literacy is both a narrative for agency as well as a referent for critique. As a narrative for agency, literacy becomes synonymous with an attempt to rescue history, experience, and vision from conventional discourse and dominant social relations. It means developing the theoretical and practical conditions through which human beings can locate themselves in their own histories and in doing so make themselves present as agents in the struggle to expand the possibilities of human life. ("Literacy” 10)

Mathabane shows us that when critical literacy enters into the community, into the conflicting social discourses that exist within each culture, the potentiality-for-being, or “the possibilities of human life” do expand.

Because Mathabane’s parents are caught in a context of colonial and racial oppression, the cultural clash between the tribal and Christian beliefs meet in a context of asymmetrical power relations: Apartheid. Even though Mathabane had little experience on the tribal homelands, he was born and raised in the social context of a modern urban police state that manipulated and distorted tribal values in an effort to uphold its rule-based set of racial “conventions.” These “conventions” controlled every aspect of his life; yet, he is able to see how the clash of conflicting discursive formations disclose the possibility of critical inquiry into each discourse that places a claim upon his “authentic” being. However, Mathabane’s rejection of the “authentic” claims from the various and contending discourses, particularly of apartheid and tribalism, places him under a constant threat of violence because of his dissent from these various communities’ conventions. Mathabane’s critical consciousness provides a framework or location for the disclosure of truth to occur within the conflict that arises out of discensus.

Freirean critical literacy is based upon an epistemology of discensus, not consensus; it is based on an epistemology which recognizes the eventful and conflictual struggle at the center of the withdrawal and arrival of truth, and not on the assertion of valid or correct representations that correspond to an essential and eternal “reality.” Consensus is antithetical to Freire’s interpretative pedagogy because he recognizes that each critical disclosure discloses something real about the social limit situation that one is in the midst of, something that can potentially trigger a violent and oppressive reaction. The affective self-finding that occurs in an ongoing inquiry is a process of revealing that which is concealed by very “real” forces that are committed to a normative version of “reality.”

Because Freire posits a processual series of events, or “acts of knowing” (“Adult Literacy” 55), rather, than an epistemological method, the ongoing inquiry into the truth of existential limit-situations makes critical consciousness an issue of disclosing the truth of a situation. Every disclosure of the truth of a situation “thus transforms what was a way of life in the real context into ‘objectum’ in the theoretical context” (“Adult Literacy” 52). In other words, the very moment of disclosing “reality” is not necessarily a critical act; once it is disclosed it is embodied as ‘object,’ a static representation. Freire’s disclosive theory of truth recognizes the paradoxical nature
of the event structure of truth: the disclosure of truth concomitantly forecloses inquiry by claiming that its nature has been domesticated, contained, and made transparent as an object. The revealing and concealing structure of truth is the reason that Freire's "method," if he could be said to have one that is not related to the modern scientistic theory of objectivism, is dialogue. There is a logical structure to dialogue that refuses to allow domestication; dialogue transforms the impulse to objectify truth by constantly representing it within the processual movement of question and answer. By continually posing questions, continually problematizing and overcoming "doxa" ("Adult Literacy" 55) in dialogic interrogation, Freirean dialogue transforms the very concept of truth. Truth has been removed from the scientistic methodology of domestication and objectification and redefined as a kairotic event. The dialogic event of truth is now reconceptualized as a dynamic situation from which truth manifests itself in a processual disclosure that, as Heidegger puts it, withdraws at the very moment of its arrival. For Freire, truth can never be domesticated or static; rather, it is a process of conflict that is both constructive and destructive.

Freire helps us to understand how authenticity needs to be conceived of as a processual movement that is enabled by disclosive rhetorical activity. Mathabane's narrative is what Mary Louise Pratt calls "autoethnographic." We should note that Pratt's notion of the representational nature of the autoethnographic narrative is at odds with the processual and disclosive nature of Mathabane's coming to critical consciousness. Pratt's concept of the "Contact Zone" is particularly important to Bizzell's most recent work ("Opinion"). As Pratt suggests, autoethnographic narratives such as Mathabane's that emerge from a contact zone critically engage the "representations others have made" ("Arts" 531) both of the author and the author's culture; this genre of text is a dialogic response that rewrites the representations created by others. Pratt's model of the contact zone is helpful in conceiving of a multicultural environment as a site of conflicting social and ideological conventions. However, local knowledges are always in conflict with the hegemonic knowledge of a speech community. Speech communities are always full of discensus and heterogeneity; authentic existence is the critical retrieval of agency, what we might call Da-sein's rescue of experience from dominant discursive formations. Unlike Freire and Mathabane, Pratt's example does not suggest or articulate the danger that is also inherent in a Contact Zone, nor, unlike Freire or Mathabane, does she explicate a mode of critical consciousness which shows the "ways to move into and out of rhetorics of authenticity" (her emphasis; 541). Pratt has a concept of authenticity that she describes as being processual: "once you set aside the notion of speech acts as normally anchored in a unified, essential subject" ("Ideology" 184). In this process, Pratt's "non-essential" speaking subject becomes authentic by being "in play" within a context. The situation and "the subject mutually determine each other ongoingly" ("Ideology" 184).

Pratt's concept of the contact zones as a play or oscillation which mutually constitutes and appropriates Da-sein through an anonymous background of social conventions is, I think, a fair description of Freire's notion of the limit-situation. Both Pratt and Freire lead us to the conclusion that knowledge is created through discensus
rather than consensus. For Freire, the way to create knowledge is to critique the community standards that create limit-situations. The idea that consensus creates "true" knowledge is dangerous because a valid critique of community standards does not lead to a dynamic and transformative view of knowledge. Through consensus a community can reject a critique; the community's claim of "correctness" is a further assertion of social conventions which depends upon a representational conception of truth. Consensus is a representational conception of truth (technically called a "coherence" theory of truth) and functions in two distinct ways to constrain critical consciousness: first, truth corresponds to the community standards, or, put another way, the standards of the community, which, established through consensus, reflect the truth; second, truth is represented as a coherent set of beliefs: this is to say, that if the standards that the community articulates are internally coherent and consistent, then the coherence of social conventions is also represented as a fixed and static truth.

In either case, whether it is the assertion that the coherence of a community's standards leads to truth or the assertion that a community's standards correspond to and reflect the actual order of things, representational ideas of truth do not foster critical questioning or dialogic problem-posing. When a community's sense of truth is representational, there is no awareness of the ways that discensus produces generative conflict. In other words, knowledge generated by social conventions is always already implicated in the suppression of critical inquiry. Bizzell's first argument about teaching academic discourse conventions and critical consciousness assumed that knowledge is created through a community consensus, that meaning is created by adopting the codes and conventions of the speech community. Bizzell's second argument about non-transcendent truth relies upon Rorty's coherence theory of truth, all the while, hedging her assertions within what she calls "postmodern skepticism" ([Academic Discourse] 283, -88). However, both of these concepts of truth are antithetical to Freirean epistemology and pedagogy. Freire argues for a continual conflict at the heart of truth; the arrival of truth which discloses and constructs new knowledge also brings with it the critical process which deconstructs or unveils the limit-situations that govern and control social and discourse conventions.

On the one hand, in Freirean pedagogy, social and discourse conventions are normative; Freire views discourse conventions as static representations that generate limit-situations. This is consonant with Bizzell's pedagogy that social and discourse conventions should be taught as "a new system of organization in English Studies to make this kind of teaching ... normative" ("Opinion" 167). On the other hand, "normative" pedagogy only continues to produce new and perhaps different limit-situations that become covered-over and embodied as static and veiled. Because she has not abandoned representationalism and coherentism, the teaching of "rhetorical arts of the contact zone" ("Opinion" 169) is normative and that which is taught will be immediately "thrown" into an overwhelming environment of local background knowledges and practices. Critical consciousness, as Freire states, occurs "[o]nly as this situation ceases to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality" (P090), then students, like Mathabane, can emerge from their particular limit-situations. It is only by teaching critical consciousness as a continuous unending process of disclosing and
incarnating truth that critical thinking allows a person to discover that he or she is "in a situation" and, consequently, can emerge from it; yet, the emerging does not yield a permanent, stable, or representational object of truth in Bizzell's sense of a direct correspondence. Rather, we come to an understanding of the event-structure of dialogically incarnated truth. Conventions frame knowledge in ways that must always be re-presented in new and different ways, not represented in normative systems of organization.

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Notes
1 A version of this article was presented at the Pedagogy of the Oppressed Conference, at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, in 1996. I would like to thank Hephzibah Roskelly for comments and suggestions that helped to improve this essay.

2 James A. Berlin argues that Freire is not a "poststructuralist indeterminist" (414) which, I think, fairly close to Bizzell's "postmodern skepticism." Berlin errs in the opposite direction, however, by claiming that Freire is a "foundationalist, a Catholic" (415). Existentialists come in various versions, some like Jaspers never completely moving away from a foundationalist conception of truth; so too, Catholics have various positions regarding foundationalism. Freire himself has never argued from the assumptions of a foundationalist "Catholic"; although, he is obviously a thinker who is concerned with issues of faith, hope, and love, these concepts are always framed by Freire from the point of view of explicating the meaning of dialogue. See in particular the way Freire adds the Christian concepts of love, humility, and faith, to the qualities of mutual trust and critical thinking in order to work out his extended definition of dialogue (P0 70-3).

3 "Da-sein" is a technical term that was developed by Heidegger and is very difficult to define in English. Translators have used "human situation," "human being," "being-there," "there-being," or "human existence," but most often the term is left untranslated. In Heidegger's "later" works he hyphenates the term "Da-sein" to place emphasis upon the two ideas that are embedded in the word: there ("Da") is always connected to being ("Sein"). Heidegger's concept of the "human situation" or Da-sein is rhetorical because it depends on the concept of Kairos: "when the call of conscience summons us to our potentiality-for-Being, it does not hold before us some empty ideal of existence, but calls us for 'the situation'" (his emphasis; Being 347). The authentic incarnate moment is kairotic because one must hear the call and then make a choice to move into the situation; those who are inauthentic, passive, and refuse the call of conscience close the situational moment: "For 'they,' however, the Situation is essentially something that has been closed off. The 'they' knows only the 'general situation' and loses itself in those opportunities which are closest to it" (his emphasis; Being 346).

4 See William D. Blattner for a discussion of the influence of Jaspers's concept on Heidegger's Being and Time.

5 For a fuller exposition of the concepts of "incarnate" and "embodied" discourse see my essay "Hermeneutic Retrieval and the Conflict of Styles in Pirandello's Sei Personaggi Cerca D'Autore."

6 Freire makes a distinction between an animal's existence in the world and a human being's holistic being-in-the-world. Animals are "submerged in life with no possibility of emerging from it, adjusted and adhering to reality. Men, on the contrary, who can sever this adherence and transcend mere being in the world, add to the life they have the existence with they make" ("Cultural" 68); "animals are immersed in [the world]. In contrast, human beings emerge from the world, objectify it, and in so doing can understand and transform it which their labor" (P0 106). The objectification that Freire speaks of is what I have been calling the discursive falling into embodiment. Human beings "are beings who project" ("Cultural" 70) themselves into their own future; in that projection they disclose themselves through interpreting their ways of being-in-the-world. Heidegger calls this phenomena "projective disclosure"; "projecting is the release of a throw by which unconcealedness submits and infuses itself into what is as such... Projective saying is saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world" ("Origin" 73-4).
In Truth, Alan R. White calls the Correspondence, the Coherence, and the Pragmatist, the three traditional theories of truth. The Performative and the Semantic theories have had less popular reception. Mary Louise Pratt argues that earlier speech act theory was "just too simplistic to reduce all the signifying practices involved in representation to the production of true or false assertions" ("Ideology" 191). White surveys the various theories of truth while Richard L. Kirkham's Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction offers a full length analysis of the various theories. Both White and Kirkham's work are from the point of view of Analytical philosophy, which excludes the various "nontraditional" Continental views of truth. The Disclosive theory of truth is developed in particular in Heidegger's "On the Essence of Truth" and in Section 44 of Being and Time. For works that discuss the Disclosive theory of truth see: DiCenso's Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth; Allen's Truth in Philosophy, and Wachterhauser's Hermeneutics and Truth. For the Pragmatic theory of truth see James' "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" and The Meaning of Truth. For the neo-Pragmatic theory see Richard Rorty's "Introduction: Pragmatism and Philosophy," "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth," and "Representation, Social Practice, and Truth."

Although Rorty argues that pragmatists "suggest that we not ask questions about the nature of Truth and Goodness, they do not invoke a theory about reality or knowledge or man which says that 'there is no such thing' as Truth or Goodness. Nor do they have a 'relativistic' or 'subjectivist' theory of Truth or Goodness. They simply would like to change the subject" ("Introduction" xiv). However, Rorty then goes on to support "Davidson's holism and coherentism [which] shows how language looks once we get rid of the central presupposition of Philosophy: that true sentences divide into an upper and a lower division—the sentences which correspond to something and those which are 'true' only by courtesy or convention" ("Introduction" xviii). Although Rorty wants to say that questions about the nature of truth are not worth asking, he does support Davidson who explicitly argues for a Coherence theory of truth: "The theory I defend" says Davidson, "is not in competition with a correspondence theory, but depends for its defense on an argument that purports to show that coherence yields correspondence" ("A Coherence" 307). Rorty sees Davidson's switch to dissolve the difference between the coherence of conventions as a way to solve the problems of a theory of correspondence; I would argue that the switch yields another representationalist view of truth and does not dissolve the problem of truth.

Philosophical hermeneutics, which frames my interpretation of Freire, has mounted a strong and important critique of the modern scientific argument for a kind of experience which is separate from other realms of experience. The scientific argument is that science is a separate realm deals with "universal" or "empirical" truth, and that rules of analysis will provide a proper method to validate those objective truths. Similarly, for example, aesthetics deals with the experience of beauty, rhetoric deals with the experience of public discourse, and composition deals with the experience of creating stylistically beautiful public discourse, each discipline has its own rules regulating its particular method. Heidegger and particularly Hans-Georg Gadamer, in Truth and Method, have argued that all human experience is interpretative, and all human experience deals equally with truth. Freire's pedagogy is also holistic and refuses to atomize experience, all experience is subject to critical consciousness and all experience discloses the truth of the humanization or dehumanization of the human situation. Contrary to the methodological approach, the application of Freirean pedagogy to composition must thematize the holistic and interpretative nature of all experience and, in particular, the interanimation of writing, reading, and critical thinking.

James L. Kinneavy's "The Process of Writing: A Philosophical Base in Hermeneutics" discusses this concept as it applies to the writing process. Most often, interpretations are not grasped explicitly in a fully thematic way, they recede into what Heidegger calls the "totality of involvements" (Being 191) in any given situation, consequently, interpretations are often transparent, they "do not stand out from the background" (Being 191) of situation, interpretations need to be "retrieved" in the recursive process of understanding. Kinneavy argues that the recursive process implicit in the forestructure of understanding is also implicit in the writing process (13).

For a fuller description of this concept see Heidegger's Being and Time section 32: "In every case interpretation is grounded in something we see in advance, a foresight" (his emphasis; 191). For Heidegger, interpretation and understanding interanimate Da-sein's involvements in the world and in the process disclose Da-sein to itself, its "being-there": "Interpretation functions as disclosure. In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-
hand, we do not stick a value on it, but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation" (190-91).

12Freire states that discourse itself has two dimensions: true and untrue words. But the word true has no connotations of "correctness" or rational validity; rather, true means that an effort has been made to "name the world": "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (P 069). Truth is defined by Freire not as an assertion of the correspondence between a word and an objective piece of "reality"; instead, truth is an existential manifestation of Da-sein's ways-of-being and potentiality-for-being in the world. Heidegger treats this problem in sections 33 to 35 of Being and Time; particular attention to section 35, "Idle Talk," illuminates Freire's discussion of "idle chatter" or empty talk" (P 068-9).

13For example, Mathabane's father attempts to kidnap and force Mathabane to go to "mountain school" where ritual circumcision is performed. Along with the circumcision, gender roles are taught; see chapter 37 in Kaffir Boy for his escape from his father's attempts to force him to attend.

14Freire distinguishes his conception of dialogue from Plato's Socratic dialogue. He claims that Plato's concept was dialogical, yet "did not constitute a true pedagogy of knowing" (Adult Literacy, 55). For a detailed argument that presents an interpretation of Plato which is consonant with Freire's idea of dialogue, see my "Rereading Plato's Rhetoric."

15As Heidegger describes it, there is a "curious opposition of presence in that it always withholds itself at the same time in a concealedness. The clearing in which beings stand is in itself at the same time a concealment" ("Origin" 53).

16Pratt conceives of speech communities not as fraternal and similar; writing and acts of literacy occur within contending discourse conventions, and each set of conventions is informed by particular interests and motivations. The multiplicity of intersecting interests is what Pratt calls "contact zones"; they are the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" ("Arts" 530). However, even Pratt's version of the fluid nature of normative discourse conventions which acknowledges contact and friction stills seems, as John Trimbur puts it, "a version of non-foundationalism without tears" (607).

Works Cited
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