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Institutional Description

There are two sets of institutional factors involved. First, I am a PhD student in the University of Louisville's rhetoric and composition program, and the research project I describe below is my dissertation. This of course influences the timeline of the project. I had initially toyed with the idea of doing something more ethnographic, involving interviews with students and faculty at QU; however, time constraints, IRB (x2!) hurdles, and of course the pandemic have urged me toward a theoretical-historical approach.

The second set of factors come from Qatar University. I provide a good deal of background information on that below, which hopefully addresses the point sufficiently, so I won't repeat myself here.

Key Theorists/Frames

I'll also keep these brief since I expand on them in the literature review below.

Mobility studies / knowledge mobilization looks at how knowledge moves and the effects of movement on that knowledge. Research in this area generally points toward an understanding of knowledge as indeterminate *practice* rather than as the stable representations it is often confused with.
- Fenwick, Tara and Farrell, Lesley
- Orlikowski, Wanda
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt

Political economic theory (specifically anti- or non-capitalist) is relevant for how it addresses the widely-held conceptualization of capitalism as monolithic and economics as apolitical.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K.
- Scott, Tony
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt

Academic literacies research is concerned with conventions of academic discourse, questioning the extent to which they can be understood as existing in any stable, uniform way and examining the power relations and ideologies that work toward such stability/uniformity.
- Lea, Mary
- Lillis, Theresa and Scott, Mary
- Street, Brian

Translingualism refers to wide-ranging efforts to articulate a non-monolingualist ideology that maintains an understanding of language difference as the norm rather than the exception in communication, inviting attention to how meaning is negotiated in interactions and the power relations involved in these.
- Canagarajah, Suresh
- Lu, Min-Zhan
- Horner, Bruce

Glossary

CEA: (from cea-accredit.org) "The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) is a specialized accrediting agency that focuses on post-secondary intensive English language programs and institutions. CEA's purpose is to provide a systematic approach by which programs and institutions can demonstrate their compliance with accepted standards, pursue continuous improvement, and be recognized for doing so. CEA conducts accreditation activities in the U.S. and internationally."

Foundation Program: similar in scope to academic bridge programs and intensive English programs, QU's Foundation Program offers mostly non-credit-bearing courses in EAP and math to prepare students for undergraduate coursework.

FYC: refers to first-year composition instruction at American institutions

MENA: refers to countries in the Middle-East North Africa region

Qatar: a small country on a peninsula in the Arabian Gulf, rich in natural gas

SACS: (from sacscoc.org) "The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education."

Draft for CCCC International Research Workshop

<u>Articulation of problem or topic</u>

Founded in 1977, Qatar University was the first postsecondary institution in Qatar. In recent years, the university has been expanding rapidly as a result of government initiatives that incentivize higher education and pressure QU, the only government university, to admit all Qatari citizens. In spite of its size and history, it is overshadowed in academic literature and international media by the extremely well-funded Education City, a collection of Western IBCs that is exclusive and considered more prestigious. QU, on the other hand, accepts all Qatari students (a little more than half of its student population, the rest being regional) and is portrayed as a more religiously conservative alternative (e.g. unlike Education City, QU campus is segregated by sex). In spite of its more local focus (or perhaps because of it—as a distinctly Qatari institution, its ambitions for international recognition parallel the nation's), it yet courts international prestige, seeking accreditation from numerous Western bodies for its colleges and programs, and celebrates its ascendancy in university rankings (e.g. Times Higher Education).

QU's Foundation Program (accredited by CEA), in which I taught for five years, aims to prepare students for their undergraduate career with courses in English and math. Given the more open enrollment, this program has expanded considerably, with the majority of students required to pass through it before beginning (or simultaneously with) their undergraduate work. It has therefore become an influential component in Qatari education. However, this influence may not be as intended. As I show with the following glimpses into the QUFP curriculum, the English program is built around commodifications of essay organization and language and delivered as universal, comprising an approach to composition pedagogy that resembles the product-oriented current-traditional rhetoric long shown to be problematic (e.g. Coles, 1969; Bizzell, 1984; Bartholomae, 1985). That this is happening in a foreign context, where the objectives of such an approach lack any cultural grounding or broader relevance, seems only to underscore the unsuitability of this approach to the QUFP mission and the country's larger educational goals.

QUFP's series of composition courses is designed to develop students' ability to produce five-paragraph evidence-based argumentative essays (progressing from 300 to 1200 words, but always five paragraphs). The structure is introduced in Intermediate Writing Workshop, the second of the four Foundation Program writing courses. Among the outcomes described in the syllabus are the following: "Before the mid-term, [students will be able to] produce [a] level-appropriate 5-paragraph cause or effect essay (minimum 300 words)" and "After the mid-term, produce 5-paragraph process and comparison/contrast essays (minimum 350 words)."

Students progress from this course to ENGL 202 by the first semester of their undergraduate program. The first SLO listed in the ENGL 202 syllabus is "By the end of the course the students will be able to use, organize and present ideas in the format required for academic writing, with: an introduction, including a hook, background information and a thesis statement, a three-part body with each paragraph having a topic sentence and supporting sentences, and a conclusion summarizing the main ideas." In addition to vocabulary and critical reading exercises, students write two essays in this class. The first is a "cause-effect" essay, which should be 450-500 words, and the final draft of this essay "must contain five paragraphs."

The second essay is argumentative, 500-550 words, and "The final draft must contain five paragraphs, one of which consists of a counter-argument and refutation."

According to the syllabus for the next and final English course, ENGL 203, among other skills to be acquired by the end of the term, "students will be able to apply previously learned essay structures to longer academic papers." This course introduces students to research writing: they practice summarizing, paraphrasing, and responding to ideas, and the coursework culminates in a 1000-1200 word term paper. The assignment description does not mention a requirement for the number of paragraphs, but a glimpse at the grading criteria for the outline component of this assignment shows that expectations hew to the five-paragraph theme. The introduction must contain "a hook, background information, and a thesis statement with a clear topic, clear focus, and parallelism in its points." After the words "thesis statement," the words "three main points" are added in bold typeface in parentheses. The body section of the outline similarly emphasizes this point with its requirement of "three main ideas," the word "three" again in bold typeface.

These objectives were shown to be problematic in our field's literature as far back as the 1960s. Regarding paragraph count, the lack of structural flexibility works against the skill of paragraphing itself and forgoes attention to writer agency. Paul Rodgers, Jr. (1966) argues that such prescribed notions of a paragraph reflect a view of writing based on pure logic that is at odds with reality, finding instead that professional writers compose paragraphs according to rhetorical purposes rather than preset formulae. Similarly, Richard Braddock (1974) shows that the common rules for topic sentences—first sentence of the paragraph, short, introduces the topic and controlling idea—are not reflected with meaningful consistency outside the writing classroom. He argues that such prescriptions become a source of error, rather than scaffolding, as students attempt to apply these in subsequent writing situations with readers unfamiliar with the peculiarities of current-traditional pedagogy. As well, while the decision to limit the number of paragraphs is often justified with the goal of maintaining coherence as one engages more complex ideas and attempts longer essays, research has shown that the perception of coherence stems from audience expectations for relations between ideas and thus has little to do with superficial (and easily countable) features (Hartwell, 1985; Lea & Street, 1998; Witte & Faigley, 1981). These scholars argue instead for attention to synthesis, elaboration, and audience awareness, while also pointing to the idiosyncratic and often unacknowledged expectations of the teachers.

Furthermore, the instruction of argumentation and analysis in the simplified and strict manner described above has been subjected to numerous criticisms. It discourages listening and dialogue, urging students instead toward false dichotomies (Lynch, George, and Cooper, 1997). It reflects an atomistic epistemology based on subject-object separation and a relatively stable reality, privileging capitalistic values of individualism and exploitation (Berlin, 1982; Trimbur, 1989). As James Berlin writes, "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality," and the implication in this pedagogy is that such a worldview is a prerequisite of advanced academic discourse. However, this worldview is not universal. Numerous scholars have uncovered literacy practices which reflect alternative worldviews, often characterized by interconnectedness and flux (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1997).[1] More locally, movements in our field away from

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1 Sharma (2019) reports on a less agonistic approach to persuasive writing derived from the *nyāya* tradition of South Asia; Schoen (2019) describes *kagiso* rhetoric from Botswana which twines harmony and dissent; and

general writing skills instruction (GWSI), e.g. scholarship on activity theory (Russell, 1995) and rhetoric as ecological (Edbauer, 2005), outmode such an approach to writing instruction as a humanist relic of literature-focused English departments that lacks transfer (Crowley, 1998). As we come to appreciate the variation and dynamism of discourse features, academic or otherwise, and the how they are determined, the very notion that a set of static templates could correlate meaningfully with the future challenges students may face in that area becomes untenable.

Moving to language more specifically, we find similar issues reflected in the assessment approach. Given the large numbers of students passing through the program, and perhaps also the diversity of the 150 or so teachers, administration strives for a standardized educational experience through the use of common rubrics, moderation sessions, and paper-swapping. These measures translate into the enshrinement of a standardized English, an insistence on the features of what are claimed to be dominant literacies in a tacit rebuke of student linguistic agency by counting the number of spelling mistakes, complex sentences, and other grammatical and mechanical aspects. The move to measure "correct" language use quantitatively betrays the flawed logic of establishing an inert, bounded language while privileging efficiency over engagement (Berthoff, 1984). Similar to the focus on superficial structural and coherence features addressed above, the implication in this assessment system is that commodifications of form reflect meaningful communication and are transferable (Lea & Street, 1998). To (mis)take repetitions of form for learning has been viewed as problematic since the decline of audio-lingualism, and more recently understandings of language as ontological, or the myth of it as a stable entity, call into question a pedagogy limited in this way (Lillis & Scott, 2007; Horner and Alvarez, 2019).

The effect of all of the above, combined with the use of plagiarism detection software, is to inculcate in students a view of writing as soulless and mechanistic. But what may seem an unfortunately, tragically empty exercise (Coles, 1969) takes on more insidious tones when we consider the larger structures of power relations involved and their interests. What ostensibly came about as a pragmatic solution amounts to an ahistorical, acontextual, and amoral view of language and literacy, to which claims of neutrality we might ask whose values and whose worldview is privileged and bear witness to what Street (1984) calls an attempt of a small elite "to maintain positions of power and influence by attributing universality and neutrality to their own cultural conventions."

In this section, I've tried to show that the pedagogical practices of the QU Foundation Program persist quite rigidly in spite of fifty years of research questioning core aspects of its approach. A cursory consideration of the various influences on the program suggests that it is not an outlier by maintaining this approach. Institutions in "developing" countries are keen to gain credibility by bringing in "experts" from "developed" countries; this can lead to hiring of teachers with minimal or irrelevant training (Pennycook, 2008) and a poor appreciation of local exigencies. Associations of language with prestige and economic growth can cause educational policy makers to overlook the actual needs of citizens (Sharma, 2019). Pursuit of disciplinarity has led to siloing, causing a breakdown of communication and knowledge-sharing between rhetoric/composition and applied linguistics (Matsuda, 1999). Textbooks by their nature rigidify

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Alexander (2019) finds in Malala Yousafzai's memoir a view of literacy development as ongoing, indeterminate, and in service to collective responsibility, to name a few examples.

knowledge practice and oversimplify the complexity of composition (Rose, 1983), the major publishers are all in the West, and they market textbooks to programs worldwide. These are complex issues that confront and shape EAP and composition programs around the world, and I argue that collectively they point to larger questions, which I intend to explore in this project.

Research Questions

1. How did we get to this point? Expanding on the above, as scholarship on composition theory and pedagogy develops, what enables the inertia of these practices (or our understanding and mobilization of them as such)?
2. What are the consequences as students, teachers, and administration engage these practices?
   A) Given Street's argument, noted above, that pretensions in literacy education to neutrality and universality tend to be more operative for a "small elite" than the students purportedly served, how do we see these benefits playing out? In other words, who is benefitting from this approach, and how?
   B) If these are practices merely masquerading as knowledge of writing (Coles), what knowledge *is* created? What changes does this so-called knowledge of writing undergo as it "moves"? And what are the effects on literacy, knowledge, and the people involved in this work?
3. If dominant or common understandings of (transnational) composition education are thereby shown to be misleading or unworkable, what are alternative framings that reflect a mobilities perspective, i.e. an appreciation of knowledge/writing as non-fixed practices that necessarily change in attempts to mobilize them?
   A) Divergent histories and approaches to composition knowledge have led to a sense of writing education within and outside the US as different conversations. But actual practices are interpenetrating (see Fraiberg et al.) and our scholarship needs to be as well, so what intersections or applications might there be between these alternatives and American FYC and EAP pedagogies?

Literature review / plan of research

In the introduction to *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*, J-K Gibson-Graham (2006) describe the stance of a researcher-activist as viewing any social site as an experiment to learn from rather than simply critique or pass judgment on. It is a collection of processes that produce information which can be the basis for reflection and improvement. I hope to treat the QU Foundation Program in just such a manner, to see what information is produced through its regular practices about how transnational (writing) education is commonly framed and understand the points of friction or misalignment that call into question the accuracy of this framing. To do so, I plan to draw on publically available institutional documents (e.g. websites) as well as course syllabi and assignment descriptions. Then, by reading these through the theoretical lenses described below, I'll propose alternative framings from a mobilities perspective.

To address the above questions, I will draw on literature from a number of areas both within and outside the field of composition studies. Scholarship on knowledge mobilization and

mobility studies in general should provide traction for the first and second questions. Also for the second, I'll delve further into Street's work and other scholarship on (academic) literacies. For 2B, I'll look at scholarship on translingualism and [possibly] the posthumanist rhetorical work of Casey Boyle; I'll also look outside the field to the transdisciplinary work of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing for its insights on mobility. In my exploration of the third question, I'll turn to literature on globalizing education, transfer, and academic literacies, while, for a broader epistemological framework, also borrowing from Tsing's and J. K. Gibson-Graham's work on political economic theory. In the following (not so discrete) sections I review some of the key work in these areas that suggests to me their usefulness for this project.

Knowledge mobilization and mobility studies

As I write this, the COVID-19 variant of the coronavirus is spreading around the world. To speak of "the virus," however, is to imply its rapid differentiation, for as it spreads, it mutates. With each new infection, small changes in its genetic code occur. Realization of this has enabled scientists to track its movement and establish a provenance for each case (see nextstrain.org). This presents an analogy for a key tenet of mobility studies: the universal does not exist without particularization—indeed, it is through particularization that it attains its universal status—but this process changes it, denying its claim to universality.

To understand how this might be paralleled in human behavior, I turn to research on knowledge mobilization. Knowledge "moves" because people negotiate difference, often unconsciously, to adapt and incorporate the information into their worldview. A key mechanism of this movement is generalization, the creation of supposed universals. Tsing (2005) theorizes these processes in her ethnographic inquiry into the myriad transnational communications that result in environmental exploitation and social injustice in Indonesia. As she gathers her data, she uncovers contradictions and misalignments at every link in these chains of communication, leading her to the conclusion that these differences do not merely hinder communication but make it possible. The mechanics of this are captured most succinctly in her articulation of the paradox of generalization. Drawing generalizations depends both on a priori recognition of commonality and subsequent willingness to negotiate difference. There must be some pre-existing commonality—what she calls an "axiom of unity"—among the elements about which one would generalize. Establishing this starting point then disposes one to see connections across difference as the generalization is "naturally" extended. Taken together, these moves enable the articulation of wider truth(s). In practice, Tsing observes, these two aspects of generalization obscure one another: we would recognize convergences across difference as such, neglecting the conditional axiom of unity that enabled them, but this taken-for-granted commonality has itself a way of erasing any difference encountered as the generalization takes root. Recognition of this conceptual slippage drives her exploration of *friction*, or the piecemeal negotiations across difference that facilitate the "movement" of universals. By movement here is meant the uptake and dissemination of universals, but also the capacity of universals to mobilize people.

In her work on the destruction of Indonesian forests, Tsing analyzes "nature" as a universal concept with considerable power for such movement. The term brings together disparate groups—village elders, young adventurers from the cities, and environmentalists—in efforts to confront rampant deforestation. Though not without some successes, their

collaboration is troubled by variance in their definitions of nature. Environmentalists see the animals and forests but not the humans; the village, however, is in the forest—villagers are part of and codependent with nature; while the adventurers view it as something to be protected, a coming-of-age resource for the youth before they settle down back in the city. Nevertheless, to the extent that there is overlap between these groups' conceptions, they are able to effect some environmental protections. Another group, the foreign capitalists, however, conceive nature in a way that facilitates their exploitative use of the land. With roots in Enlightenment subject-object dichotomy and scientific classification, the Western trope of the frontier—a boundary between humans and the wild, and a site for resource extraction—has long positioned capitalists (from sugar plantations to oil, wood, etc.) as working for the benefit of civilization. Myriad communications between these groups involving encounters and negotiations of difference in this and many other concepts leads to the events that made headlines and impacted the lives of millions, creating both fortunes and bankruptcies, displacing peoples and wreaking havoc on the environment.

Reflecting on the paradox of friction behind all of this, Tsing observes,

"Engaged universals travel across difference and are charged and changed by their travels. Through friction, universals become practically effective. Yet they can never fulfill their promises of universality. Even in transcending localities, they don't take over the world. They are limited by the practical necessity of mobilizing adherents. Engaged universals must convince us to pay attention to them. *All* universals are engaged when considered as practical projects accomplished in an heterogeneous world" (Tsing, 2005, p8, emphasis original).

The question of universal essences has been a subject of philosophical debate since Plato; Tsing's contribution is to deny the imagined purity of things—e.g. markets, commodities, ideas, knowledge—by contending that their very existence depends on the idiosyncrasies that defy a homogenizing definition and trouble their movement. We would look past these differences, however, toward the enabling power of universality. The yen for universals and the self-disguising nature of generalization are thus fundamental to the construction and communication of knowledge. Knowledge generated, or rather, *practiced* (as "a capability produced and reproduced in recurrent social practices and always in the making," Orlikowski, 2006, p460) is published, reported on, set down in textbooks, and reified in museums and policy. These processes participate in and inevitably change what was being articulated, inflecting it according to the exigencies of each new setting. Consistent with Tsing's observations on the nature of universals, mobilities scholars point out that knowledge is, "paradoxically, both fixed and mutated as it is mobilized across boundaries" (Fenwick & Farrell, 2012, p3).

These scholars maintain that the swift development of communication technologies has brought increasing movement of (or attempts to move) knowledge across borders. This border-crossing implies packaging—reification—in some form, which, these authors observe, is most often linguistic and thus generally textual: "Texts give knowledge portability," they argue (3). As well, textual form lends knowledge an apparent fixity that enhances its aura of universality, imbuing it with an alluring, even compelling capacity (Smith, 1999). By appearing in isolation from the contextual factors that shaped them, texts assume the guise of universality and therefore become endowed with authority and coerciveness. As Dorothy Smith (1999) writes, "To read is

to expose oneself to capture. It is to risk being entered by an organization of language and making it ours. The power of a text bearing the marks of authority when it is launched into public space is considerable. As readers are captured, it comes to provide the terms of discussion with others similarly caught" (214). Institutions, relying on this affordance of the written word, use texts to exercise epistemological oversight, to inaugurate and frame discourse. In Bakhtinian terms, texts become the mediational means for the centripetal force of unifying powers. These are in constant tension, however, with the centrifugal forces of negotiation and interpretation.

Yet textuality, or belief in the value (and possibility) of fixing knowledge, is not universal. Writing on public memory, Bradford Vivian (2004), for example, observes this difference between gypsy culture and Western culture. The West tries to fix public memory in monuments and memorials, often as a means for achieving social cohesion, failing to appreciate that "an official site of public memory—a monument, an archive, or sacred ground—represents not the static container of such memory, but the dynamic reference point for the diverse memory work that sustains it" (203). Gypsies, on the other hand, relate their history orally from generation to generation, and it changes with every telling. Gypsy refusal to fix public memory reflects the belief that "without a capacity for variation, such memories would not 'exist'" (204). This echoes the universality/particularization paradox and suggests an elusiveness to, if not the illusion of, knowledge mobilization; as well, without positing a monolithic "Western culture," it likewise betokens a pervasiveness within Western countries, pointing to a shared isolationist ontology that, from shipping containers to IP packets, prefers discrete, stable, manipulable chunks of information. Knowledge, like commodities, can be isolated from its spatial or temporal context, captured in some form, transmitted, and received unaltered.

With the these ideas in mind, the factors that influence these negotiations and the determining role of institutions are, at least for my purposes, what then become of interest. Ben Levin and Amanda Cooper (2012) take up such questions in their investigations into the mobilization and impact of educational research. They find that the impact of research in general is contingent on social and political context, particularly as these affect the building of consensus around certain ideas by acting as a filter on which research "sticks," by inflecting the research according to (efforts to forge) ideological alignments, or by encouraging/enabling certain research to be carried out over others. Writing on educational administration, Levin and Cooper note that "Real policy choices are almost always the result of some combination of education knowledge, personal experience, political considerations and the interpersonal dynamics of the organization, all of which change over time" (24). They find evidence of the morphological effects of these factors in disparities between empirical data from educational research and ongoing actual practice.

Michelle LaFrance (2019) demonstrates as much in her study of the uptake of the term "information literacy" among composition instructors. Key terms like this are developed by professional organizations and administrations to articulate a shared goal, part of a guiding vision to imbue our work with some coherence. They respond to broad contextual factors—consider "information literacy" in the era of "fake news"—and operate with a generalized student body in mind in the creation of position statements and policies. LaFrance suggests that by their promotion such texts attract focus and energy, becoming the sites through which individuals negotiate local conditions and personal values. In this particular study, librarians asserting an area of expertise and more traditional teachers associated the term with library databases and

correct citational practice, while other teachers defined it in terms of the ability to evaluate the reliability of a source and exercise critical thinking. The variations that LaFrance uncovers show the term to be more a lightning rod for discord than a tool for building unity. This is particularization of an institutionally ordained universal. LaFrance therefore argues that the (institutional) mobilization of educational research might be less about knowledge mobilization than about setting the stage and terms for negotiation (through factors such as program design and interdepartmental relations).

Thus, in the recognition of both the instability of knowledge and the contortions of particularization, there is the suggestion that knowledge mobilization, intentionally or not, has more to do with erasure and the prevention of what could be. If people are talking about *x*, they forget about or never come to know (practice) *y*. Of concern is as much about whose knowledge artifacts become objects of negotiation as what ways of knowing are erased or drowned out in the discussion.

Translingualism

"Language has become the *site* of globalization and not simply a tool in it" (Donahue, 2019, p. 41, emphasis original).

As noted earlier, developments in communication technology have been credited with increasing mobilization of knowledge across (geographical, cultural, institutional) borders, which in turn reveals the challenges of such an endeavor, or in other words, the reality of knowledge as a practice (and thus inherently dynamic) and the slippage of generalization. Similarly, Horner and Alvarez (2019) observe that "changes in global communication technologies and migration patterns" have brought recognition of "linguistic heterogeneity and [the] fluctuating character of language practices worldwide," reflected in scholarship around translinguality and associated concepts (5). These developments, by increasing the number and reach of interactions, render difference in more obvious ways, which occasions inquiry into areas previously thought homogeneous. In this way, existing models that maintain static categories and treat difference as anomalous or as something that can be overcome through education are proven no longer serviceable (if they ever really were), auguring a sea change with regard to how knowledge, language, and our relations to these are conceived.

Appreciating the uniqueness of every utterance means that language, as with knowledge, does not exist but as it is produced. As Horner and Alvarez maintain, writing (and speaking, reading (see Smith quote above), and listening), no matter by published poet or EAP student, is the creation of language. The same must therefore be said of knowledge of how to write. Knowledge of writing does not inhere in culturally weighted and politically motivated abstractions but is continually created in the actual practice of writing. This gives extra weight to complaints that the knowledge of writing students are practicing is useful only insofar as it enables them to complete the course and receive an acceptable grade. It cannot be otherwise if the curriculum defines knowledge in terms of static, "universal" forms. As Orlikowski (2006) writes, "Everyday practices and the knowing generated as a result [are] deeply bound up in the material forms, artifacts, spaces, and infrastructures through which humans act." "Knowing is material," she concludes (460-1). The (knowledge of) writing that students produce is no exception. The current approach at QU seems to be an attempt to recreate the context that

produces successful Western academic writing, but this not only assumes a homogeneity across both the academic writing and the contexts it mimics; it presumes that a crystallization of these can be replicated, not to mention in very different sociopolitical circumstances. Amy Zenger (2018) draws a parallel between such an approach and municipal policy makers who try to import *prêt-à-porter* solutions from other cities. Inevitable variation in the material conditions belies this tack, and circumscribing production in this way likewise impacts the use value of the resulting knowledge practices. What is offered instead is a commodity with a hyper-localized (i.e. limited to the program) exchange value. At QU, the program in question actively seeks to extend this value by pursuing Western accreditation (e.g. CEA, SACS), but these efforts stem from the same logic by imitating a model developed and maintained in and for a different context.

If we reject as useless illusion, damaging for what it prevents, the dissemination of a universal model, how can educators proceed in these contexts? The solution is not (as I used to think) better models that are somehow more local or culturally relevant (e.g. teach the "eight-legged essay" to Chinese students). Nor is it to deny the reality of linguistic and genre conventions. Rather, any approach, while acknowledging standards, must highlight their always ongoing emergence and align with dynamic material conditions of production. Attention to these points us to the shifting and multifarious connections (from personal relationships to economic and political ties and the different manifestations these might take) that substantiate and sustain a place. Much scholarly work from the late twentieth century to present has addressed the question of how to understand connections between micro-level sites and macro-level forces, but such a dichotomous framing precludes a nuanced survey. Zenger (2016; 2018), for example, drawing on Aihwa Ong's and Peter Michael Smith's deconstructions of the global/local binary whereby "global" ends up being associated with oppressive economic forces and abstract universals and "local" connotes culture and relative passivity, argues that rhetoric and composition too often views the local in static terms of nature and innocence which negate agency. As she demonstrates with examples from the American University of Beirut, with its complex history and ties to the US and across the MENA region, "localities function simultaneously on local, national, and transnational scales" (2016, p. 143).

Bearing in mind that universals exist only in their particularization, it thus ultimately makes more sense to begin with the local, focusing our attention on the idiosyncrasies of how it both creates and is constituted by connections beyond it (Lu & Horner, 2009). In their article on academic literacies, Lillis and Scott (2007) delineate such an approach as they argue for a shift from a *normative* to *transformative* perspective on literacy education, with the latter building on the former to look at what students bring with them that changes or reconstitutes literacy as they negotiate its conventions. This resonates strongly with translinguality which, as Horner and Alvarez (2019) assert, does not view students simply as consumers but proceeds from the recognition of their writing as a sustaining force of language and language standards. A course in writing informed by these theories then becomes a project in collective exploration and re-creation of language, knowledge, and the self vis-à-vis its environment. For a concrete example of such pedagogy, we might turn to Canagarajah's (2020) discussion of literacy autobiographies, which "situate the experiences and perspectives of writers in their invested and contested social contexts to provide a critical vantage point on dominant knowledge" (25). The focused reflection on how one's language practices have been shaped that is entailed by this work reasserts the writer as agentic and can lead to a more accurate understanding of the sociopolitical

forces that rely on individuation for their impact.

Political economy and composition pedagogy: The writing course as pericapitalist site

The approach sketched above, as an intervention in one corner of a hierarchically organized institution which is itself in a kind of fractal relation with broader hegemonic forces, is sure to be met with if not defined by its resistance. Indeed, the widespread intransigence of the curricular features I describe in the first section might be seen as evidence of this resistance. To address these, in this section I turn to political economic theory.

With roots intertwined with the onset of the plantation system in the 16th century, core tenets of capitalism can be appreciated through attention to the conceptualization of land that it reflects. Sylvia Wynter, writing of the colonial Caribbean, illustrates the capitalist view of land with attention to what it is not via the plot/plantation dichotomy. "Plot" here refers to a use-value agricultural orientation, the subsistence farming practiced by enslaved Africans on land set aside for them by the plantation owners. While the plot represents "the focus of resistance to the market system and market values," it nonetheless benefits that system by supporting the plantation structure since the owner does not pay to feed the enslaved workers (99). She suggests this ambivalence has and will inevitably lead to clashes unless wholescale revisions of this system are undertaken. As others demonstrate, this dichotomy and the tension it implies has become a defining theoretical feature of capitalism. Immanuel Wallerstein's (2004) description of "semiproletarian households" shows how this relationship to the land has been generalized in the evolution of capitalism. This type of household refers to those in which some members' labor is non-wage-earning, for example, as gardening or babysitting. Capitalists prefer this type of household because they can pay lower wages to the wage-earner who shares in the value produced by the other members. As with the plot/plantation, the use-value is contained in and redounds to the capitalist. In the modern system, there are pressures for full proletarianization—more wages for laborers and increased demand for capitalists—but the ambivalence that Wynter highlights persists: "Rather than think of proletarianization as a capitalist necessity, it would be more useful to think of it as a locus of struggle, whose outcome has been a slow if steady increase, a secular trend moving toward its asymptote" (Wallerstein, 35). Tsing (2015) weighs in on this point in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, where she echoes the plot/plantation and semiproletarian household arrangements with the concept of "salvage accumulation," which refers to the conversion of value created in noncapitalist settings into capitalist assets. But where Wynter sees inevitable clashes and Wallerstein, ongoing struggles and increasing proletarianization, Tsing argues that noncapitalist ways of life will heartily persist in what she terms "pericapitalist sites, where all kinds of practices, capitalist and otherwise, flourish, [enabling the] economic diversity [which] makes capitalism possible [while offering] sites of instability and refusal of capitalist governance" (301). It is a nuanced difference, but one worth noting for the enabling perspective it offers.

Contrary to increasingly common understandings of capitalism as all-pervading (see neoliberal efforts to separate politics from the economy and the rise of market fundamentalism), these noncapitalist relations always exist but, transfixed by the excesses of capitalism, we often fail to recognize them. Gibson-Graham (2006) articulate this as "capitalocentric" thinking, or the tendency to think the world in capitalist terms, which implicitly attributes homogeneity and hegemony to capitalism. In other words, by talking about capitalism as, or acting as if capitalism

were monolithic, we maintain it as such. This tendency in effect allows our noncapitalist visions, relations, and work to be circumscribed or predetermined by defining them in opposition to the monolith that we ourselves create. Gibson-Graham, drawing on Althusser's concept of overdetermination, argue for a non-essentializing epistemology whereby "a capitalist site cannot appear as the concrete embodiment of an abstract essence. It has no invariant 'inside' but it is constituted by its continually changing and contradictory 'outsides'" (15-16). The apparent stability across time and space, they assert, is one of the conditions of meaning but "more as an *enabling belief* (that we are talking about the same thing) than as an actual state of ontological or conceptual 'commonality'" (echoing Tsing's "axiom of unity" and the slippage of generalization) (16, emphasis original).

Abandoning this capitalocentrism has "the potential to liberate multiple economic subjectivities" (189) and reveal other forms of economic relations. Nevertheless, as Tsing shows, these frequently develop in "capitalist ruins," the spaces ravaged in the "endless accumulation of wealth" and then forgotten. Thus, while other economic relations could persist without capitalism(s), they are also to an extent enabled by it. It is this nature that can inform a reconceptualization of writing pedagogy within institutions that increasingly participate in and are shaped by the market economy. Writing programs could operate in such a way as to acknowledge both the reality of the economic (or ideologically hegemonic) forces at play as well as the reality of the student, teacher, and administrative labor that both constitutes and destabilizes them.

Pericapitalist sites, Tsing argues, are in part characterized by their tenuous relationship with supply chains and capitalist oversight, and thus the labor in these pericapitalist sites is marked by precarity, which necessitates recognition of and collaboration across difference. Entities (in her example, mushrooms and trees) are brought together and seek out relationships with unlikely others for survival. There is no telling how long these relationships will persist, and while it is all but certain that the entities will be changed by the engagement, there is no telling exactly how. This echoes the view of language and knowledge as always in a state of becoming that I describe above. And, while some part of the value produced by students in the creation of language and (knowledge of) writing, by meeting institutional mandates and potentially reinscribing linguistic and compositional norms, redounds to forces of inequality, student labor in a translingual writing program is as well marked by its use value not only as it positions students agentically with regard to these norms and prepares them for future learning (Bawarshi, 2017), but also as contributes to the ongoing emergence of these standards.

[Gibson-Graham, Boyle, CTR and EAP? – this section is incomplete and may be deleted]

We can see this pitfall of capitalocentric-like thinking playing out in the field of composition scholarship. Kastman Breuch (2002), for example, labors to rescue the post-process movement from its tendency (implied in the name) to create process pedagogy as a bugbear to define itself against, pointing out that it was never so uniform and arguing that maintaining it as such both erases important lessons from process scholarship and hamstrings the development of post-process theory. Boyle (2018) echoes this complaint in his assessment of the "critical turn" in composition scholarship vis-à-vis current-traditional rhetoric; the latter was never so uniform, and discussing and dismissing it as such prevents us from recognizing the benefits it might offer us. These examples encourage a degree of care with regard to how I treat the EAP pedagogy

described in the first section, particularly given its considerable debt to current-traditional rhetoric (as commonly understood). Boyle argues for renewed attention product-oriented CTR pedagogy for what it offers by way of insights into rhetoric as "a practice that exercises serial encounters within ecologies to inform bodies" (27). He likewise questions the critical turn's emphasis on reflection as a continuation of Cartesian subject-object separation that presumes critical distance is possible, a belief which he shows to be at the root of many of the problems that plague humanity (e.g. environmental degradation) and is increasingly revealed by advances in communication media to be false.

[with this broader framework in place, here I move toward literature on globalizing education and then perhaps more on transfer research]

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