

Introduction to Special Issue on Literacy, Democracy, and Fake News: Making it Right in the Era of Fast and Slow Literacies

Thomas P. Miller—University of Arizona
Adele Leon—University of Arizona

Fake news is an insidious form of post-truth rhetoric, and social media exponentially increases the problems of misinformation and narrow-mindedness. For an ever-growing number of people who get their information online, social media platforms both feed content that viewers already agree with and encourage social grouping, limiting encounters with different ideas that may challenge settled beliefs.

—Bruce McComiskey, *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition* (19)

Fake news is not new. Since ancient times, racist and nativist stories have been used to justify attacks on minorities and immigrants. Rumor mongers and then pamphleteers justified dispossessions, tortures, and massacres by circulating inflammatory accounts of how marginalized groups such as Jews preyed on children and the weak. American journalism's founding father Benjamin Franklin fired up the passions of his colonial readers by faking accounts of Indian massacres ordered by King George (Soll). To check the influence of mass propaganda in the twentieth century, rhetoric and composition courses turned to criticizing logical fallacies and emotional appeals. We have continued to rely on critiquing appeals to public prejudices even as we have come to see facts and truths as socially constructed and politically motivated. If we look past the modern idealization of the rule of reason over emotion, we may be able to develop a more broadly engaging response from rhetoric's distinctive attention to the dynamics of pathos and ethos in the collaborative process of composing shared knowledge.

What is new about fake news is how quickly it goes viral. Following lines of analysis set out in the headnote from McComiskey's *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*, this special issue examines how "click bait" stories are calculatedly composed to inflame prejudices in much the way rumor mongers and propagandists did. Fake news circulates through botnet networks that use algorithms to profile users and feed them stories that fit their individual biases. The mass media could only track users' preferences through crude measures such as subscription lists, but as Timothy Laquintano and Annette Vee note, interactive media customize information feeds to fit the prejudices of individual readers, as becomes annoyingly apparent any time one searches for a product or topic and then finds related ads

and stories suggested in sidebars.

Networked literacies call for interactive pedagogies that are attuned to the socio-cognitive networks that shape how we process information. *Information literacy* tends to be defined in terms of finding and assessing information. As discussed in this issue, this information-processing model does not adequately attend to the distinctive dynamics of networked literacies. In our introduction, we frame the studies that follow by reviewing research on how resistant we are to information that challenges our political assumptions. The populist revolt against reasoned argument has shaken our country's faith in expertise, education, and informed debate in ways that rhetoricians are distinctly prepared to address. Rhetoricians have traditionally been less concerned with being reasonable and more interested in the pragmatics of how the passions motivate action and how our identifications with others guide our responses. We can renew these concerns by taking note of the research on social psychology that we will use to frame the lines of inquiry that thread through this issue.

Studies of social psychology can help us consider how we can best respond to the populist authoritarianism of our times. These anti-intellectual trends pose a direct threat to the rising attention to civic engagement that is having such a vital impact in our institutions and on literacy studies. As Christopher Minnix's essay suggests, conservative propagandists are attacking the critical junctures where interactive pedagogies come together with global partnerships, service learning, and community literacy initiatives. Populist attacks on the "new civics" and other progressive reforms are pivotal to the successes that conservatives have had in turning a rising portion of the public against higher education (Randall). For the first time, a majority of Republicans now perceive higher education as a negative influence on society (Graham; Pew Research Center).

Conservative attacks on liberal education are part of the populist repudiation of expertise and informed deliberation that make fake news more than just the latest form of political propaganda. Studies of the partisan brain can help us reflect upon how we are to engage with these challenges in our classrooms and in our research. The research of John Haidt and other social psychologists provides opportunities to renew the relations with the ethical and political concerns of moral philosophy that have been vital to the history of rhetoric. As at other critical junctures in our history, studies of social psychology can help us understand how morals and mores are evolving in tandem with broader changes in literate technologies, epistemologies, and political economies. Research on how we think about values has transformative possibilities for rhetorical studies of the networks through which fake news circulates, as we will sketch out to provide a broader context for the articles that follow.

Fake news is a challenging case in point for considering the historical trends we face because we tended to envision connected thinking and communication ecologies in idealistic terms before we came to realize just how efficiently social networks spread toxic messages that poison environments. To inoculate students against fake news stories that have gone viral, it is only natural for proponents of liberal education to try to uphold the sort of "well-reasoned, well-researched argument" that David Riche cites (84). As Jacob Craig discusses, such print-based models of deliberative argument do not readily transfer to click-and-go literacies. Broader questions about the rhetorical efficacy of critical analysis arise in several of the articles in this issue. The historic changes in literacy that are examined in this issue challenge us to reflect upon how we can bridge the expanding gap between the literacies

we teach and the ones our students enact. In our concluding piece, David Riche argues for building on socio-transactional models of communication to engage with the interactive dynamics of rhetorical agency and rhetorical responsiveness. Following through on the work on rhetorical listening of Krista Ratcliffe and others, Riche configures the interface between agency and responsiveness as a matter of recognizing how vulnerable we become when we openly listen to others.

To strengthen the continuities among the four articles in this issue, we begin by considering the challenges of subjecting fake news to rational analysis by contrasting fast media with slow thinking using Daniel Kahneman's influential *Thinking Fast and Slow*. The quick intuitive associations that guide us as we surf the net can be overruled by deliberative reasoning in the ways that Craig envisions in his essay on assessing the credibility of news reports. However, our everyday thinking about controversial issues is often guided less by a reasonable concern to be right than by our desire to be on the right side. We will draw on studies of the partisan brain to connect Timothy Laquintano and Annette Vee's examination of the circulation networks of fake news with the cognitive networks through which we process politically-loaded information. Research on how we think through our relationships to others can help us connect rhetorical analyses of fake news with broader concerns about science deniers and other populist trends that have laid the groundwork for the libertarian assault on public education. To engage effectively with such social movements, we need to listen harder than we have to the anxieties and aspirations of less-educated Americans. We need to move past the dismayed responses of liberals to the last election and advance the grassroots collaborations that are vital to our institutions. Riche's discussion of the vulnerabilities of engaging in reciprocal rhetorics can help us reflect on these needs.

Our discipline is well positioned to respond to how libertarian sentiments have gone viral because our engagements with service learning and community literacies provide us with an expansive articulation apparatus to address the nativist and globalist conspiracies that Minnix discusses. Engagement is a pivotal concern in the last two articles in this issue because it is vital to understanding our institutional and interpersonal possibilities. Riche's assessment of the vulnerabilities that arise out of our need to connect with others draws on Diane Davis's *Inessential Solidarity*, which provides a theoretical assessment of how our social affinities constitute our identities in nonessentialist ways. Such theoretical frames can help us move beyond the liberal tendency to assume that well-informed people essentially think as we do. The renewal of liberal education, and liberalism more generally, depends on engaging in more broadly-based collaborative inquiries. Rhetoric and composition specialists are well positioned to advance such collaborations, as is evident in how pointedly compositionists have been attacked by the National Association of Scholars' condemnations of the "new civics" (Randall). Such notoriety can make individuals and programs feel targeted, but it can also serve to validate what we are doing because it shows that even our harshest critics recognize the historic impact of our work with civic engagement. In the rest of our introduction, we use research in social psychology to examine how rhetoric's traditional concern for the composition and mediation of shared knowledge can help us defend and renew the work of public institutions of learning.

Slow Thinking and Fast Media

The first articles in this issue complicate the presumption that the best way to counteract the impact of fake news is simply to teach students to be more critical about what they read. Craig takes note of the rhetorical skills of the Macedonian teenagers who compose fake news stories to profit from click-bait ads. Those students are a powerful example of how students who can be so adept at finding information can be so “easily duped” by what they find. This problem has been surveyed by the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), which provided a “bleak” assessment of the critical depth of click-and-flow literacies. The group’s argument is set out in the title of their widely influential report “Evaluating Information: Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning.” SHEG has proposed curricula that reach from middle schools to general education. As Craig discusses, such efforts to teach civic reasoning can be enhanced by attending to how the rhetorical dynamics of network literacies complicate print-centric assumptions that close reading teaches students to be reasonable. As Craig’s article notes, such conceptions of information literacy do not attend to the rhetorical complexities involved in surfing across diverse platforms, media, and genres. Networked reading has been examined in Daniel Keller’s *Chasing Literacy: Reading and Writing in an Age of Acceleration* and in pieces such as Lester Faigley’s “Rhetorics Fast and Slow.” We will connect these broader discussions to Craig’s essay by using Kahneman’s *Fast and Slow Thinking* to distinguish the associational modes of thinking from the deliberative modes of reasoning that we teach through close reading and critical analysis.

The curricula proposed by SHEG teach historical thinking through strategies such as close reading, contextualizing, corroborating, and “sourcing” that are extremely useful for those seeking to teach students information literacy. Craig’s essay adds to this repertoire of critical thinking strategies by considering the rhetorical strategies that Macedonian newsies use to hawk their stories on the web. Such efforts to manipulate others may be difficult for us to look to as models because we have generally critiqued propagandists and upheld literary works as models to be emulated. The deference that we have paid to liberal education has come under attack with populist assaults on informed debates and expertise as elitist. These attacks on the sensibility of the liberally educated call upon us to expand our attention to the experiences and motivations that students bring to our classes and the collaborative modes of experiential learning that can help them understand what reflection feels like. Such learning begins and ends with engagement because students have to care enough to want to develop the sort of rhetorical awareness that Craig discusses, including “both a critical understanding of the nature of networks and the rhetorical possibilities of researching, writing, and distributing information online.” Those possibilities need to matter to students (37).

And therein lies the challenge of helping students transfer what we teach to how they read. When we consider transfer, we often presume a rational model akin to metacognition, thinking about thinking, but if we understand thinking to be about imagination and empathy as well as generalization and recontextualization, we may be better able to help students care enough about what we teach to remember it when they leave our classrooms. The differences between intuitive thinking and deliberative analysis are examined in Kahneman’s *Thinking Fast and Slow*. According

to Kahneman, we generally rely on effortless holistic intuitions in routine situations—when we walk, pause to locate a sound or sight at a distance, or read anger in a face we encounter. When situations defy our presuppositions and we have to give them a second thought, we shift into a more deliberate mindset, for example when we walk on uneven ground, pause to consider whether that noise was a shot, or try to figure out why someone is mad at us. Problems arise when we rely on our initial impressions to interpret more complex concerns. Kahneman and other social psychologists often use interactive experiments aimed at surfacing expectations, sometimes involving presuppositions about character types. For example, in the famous “Linda Problem,” Kahneman asked subjects about whether a young “outspoken” woman who had majored in philosophy and is concerned with “discrimination and social justice” is more likely to be a bank teller or a feminist bank teller. People tend to follow the intuitive associations to identify her as a feminist because they do not pause to consider that logically it is far less likely that she is a feminist bank teller than simply a bank teller.

Kahneman uses Systems 1 and 2 thinking as an analogy for explaining how we rely on stereotypical presuppositions until we are pressed to stop and reflect upon our responses. For example, most people think the answer to this brainteaser is quite straightforward: a bat and a ball cost \$1.10, with the bat costing a dollar more than the ball. How much does the ball cost? To recalibrate and realize it cannot cost ten cents, most of us have to switch into a more analytical mindset—though more analytical thinkers may get it right at the first pass. If you are less adept at math and had to recalibrate (and felt pleasure in doing so), then you are more of a fluid thinker who enjoys shifting interpretive frames. Many of us, and our students, generally follow predictable cognitive “biases” in thinking through experience—such as the tendency to look to confirm presuppositions or the tendency to follow the herd (which was termed the *bandwagon fallacy* by those seeking to correct the irrationality of everyday reasoning). With System 1 thinking, we often over-estimate our intuitive reasoning skills and hesitate to make the effort to question commonsensical assumptions, especially those that are familiar to us. When experts are challenged to transfer their skills to a novel task, they often do not slip into a deliberate mindset to solve the problem at hand, but instead rely on their “expert intuition” to holistically recognize and interpret patterns in an unconscious, almost effortless manner, whether they are experts at dancing or criticizing fake news stories.

System 2 thinking requires focused deliberative effort—the sort of effort involved in slowing down to systematically examine the credibility of sources, the reliability of a writer, and the verifiability of a claim. Taking the time to care about such things is hard, especially for students who feel constantly pressured to get up to speed on their studies and then turn to the internet to relax and connect with friends. Our efforts to teach students to analyze the credibility of sources face the same “bleak” prospects as fact checkers trying to keep up with post-truth politicians. Our Twitter-in-Chief built his base by claiming that Barak Obama was not born in America, and that one of his primary opponent’s father was involved in the assassination of JFK. Such lies fly so quickly around the internet that they morph from outlandish to commonplace within an hourly news cycle. Within hours, a group such as FactCheck.org weighs in to debunk the story, but as Lombardo discusses, once the report has “echoed” around the country, “those who already heard it are unlikely to revise their initial impressions” (qtd. in McComiskey 18). Months or even years later, we are faced with the

work of getting students to trace a fake news story back through circulation networks to question its reliability. By that time, students are challenged to rethink a story that they may have “shared” so many times that it has gained the standing of an article of faith. Given these dynamics, it is no wonder that when we press students to do the hard work of engaging System 2 thinking to critique their unexamined shared knowledge, they may respond with an exasperated “whatever” and take a frustrated glance at their phone.

This is Your Brain on Fake News

We generally do not scramble to rethink ideas that are “shared” with our social networks because our biases against topics are often shaped by our biases toward the groups with whom we identify. This tribal instinct is powerfully documented in the research of Jonathan Haidt and other social psychologists who have documented how test subjects resolutely refuse to change their minds even when presented with incontrovertible evidence that a figure they identify with has lied on a topic. The studies that Haidt draws upon amply demonstrate that evidence often does not change minds when it requires people to change sides—even if the sides are simply opposing red and blue teams that have been set up as part of the experiment. This is not just true of the less educated or closed minded; it is true of you and us. After all, when was the last time you changed your position on a major political or ethical issue that you care about simply because you were presented with a thorough-going analysis? Generally when we change our minds on something we feel strongly about, for example to switch parties, we do so after long reflections that are often triggered by experiences and felt needs more than by a reasoned decision based on careful analysis. Such a change often entails not a shift in position but experiential learning and personal reflections that arouse and fulfill feelings and affiliations that we have come to value. In these partisan times, our irrational nature is hardly news, but taking account of thinking along the bias is essential if we are to make realistic assessments of the efficacy of our research and teaching about fake news. In the end, what changes do we imagine will follow from our explications, and how do we imagine that change will come about?

Thinking along the bias (which psychologists term “motivated cognition”) is the cognitive interface for the social networks that are examined in the second article in this issue (Hughes and Zaki). Following the criticisms of “partisan hackery” (24) in Jacob Craig’s article, Timothy Laquintano and Annette Vee begin by setting out a belief in “evidence-based inquiry and argument” and then call for literacy studies to consider both “how people encounter texts on an everyday basis” and how texts circulate through “computational and automated writing systems” that “amplify” the distribution of fake news (43). Laquintano and Vee map out an incredible “ecosystem” in which “robot writers” package Tweets and other messages to fool a gatekeeper bot into thinking they’re human so that texts will be forwarded to the botnets that form flash-mob publics around click-bait stories that create enough buzz to fire people up to click and retweet. “The robots among us” (59) create social profiles and mimic human interactions to generate hashtags and texts that fool the bots that police networks. These bot nets circulated fake news stories that reached more than a hundred million Americans during the last election. As Laquintano and Vee note, it is estimated that 20% of all election-related tweets were generated by bots, and some sources project that half of Trump’s 30 million followers

were bots. These bots mimicked grassroots groups to engage in “astroturfing” that channeled the collective energies of opposing constituencies into dead-end nonevents.

The robotized publics that Laquintano and Vee describe have the feel of a sci-fi film such as the *Matrix* series. That series began when the main character is shown that he lives in a technologically manufactured reality and offered the choice of taking two pills: one that will put him back asleep to go on believing the comforting fictions he has lived with, and another that will wake him up to “stay in Wonderland” and see “how deep the rabbit hole goes.” Do we imagine our students will choose the red or blue pill—the one that leaves them comfortably snuggling up to fellow believers or the one that leaves them wide eyed and alienated from their social networks? If we are to avoid being patronizing in answering that question, we need to acknowledge that we all tend to be more comfortably snuggled into our social networks than we might like to acknowledge. When we are presented with information that threatens the values that are central to our cognitive schema and social relationships, the threat centers of our brains fire up in ways that are detailed in Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind*. Such information lights up the same emotional areas of the brain that we use to respond to other sorts of threats—not the cognitive centers that are identified with “cool reasoning tasks” (102). One of Haidt’s guiding principles is that “feelings come first.” We need to keep that principle in mind as we consider how we can get students to rethink the easy-going prejudices and presuppositions that we all rely upon to get through the day.

At a cognitive level, such critical interventions often attempt to get students to apply System 2 thinking to the associational and intuitive patterns of thought that they share with their social networks. Laquintano and Vee’s article deepens our sense of the challenges involved in such critical interventions by exploring how fake-news networks process stories at a speed that engages the System 1 thinking involved in motivated reasoning. As we scan the web, we all tend to look for information that confirms our presuppositions, and we ignore or minimize information that contradicts our basic assumptions. The immediacy of this type of thinking challenges us to consider whether we can expect our research and teaching to have any more impact on our students than the fact checkers who chase after yesterday’s fake news story. That is a depressing prospect to consider because research on the cognitive impact of debunking is not encouraging (Chan et al.; Ecker et al.). Laquintano and Vee provide a compelling account of the automated practices that shape people’s interactions with fake news. It is on us to decide how to translate this awareness into scholarly and pedagogical modes of intervention that can be used to confront the psychological and political forces at work in the flash-mob publics that form around how we think along the bias. Haidt’s work provides broadly accessible accounts of moral psychology that can help us talk with students about the emotional and imaginative dynamics of how we think about values (see, for example, Haidt, “Moral Psychology for the Twenty First Century”).

Social theorist Nicholas Gane examines the critical challenges presented by the penetration “of ever-faster technologies into all spheres of ‘human’ life” (21). Fake news is only the most grievous example of the dimming prospects for critical reflection in our accelerating networked society. As Lester Faigley discusses, we need to work with students to *slow down* our thinking and reflect on our (re)actions. To engage students, we are going to have to provide the sort of compelling narratives and

expansive visions that Faigley briefly sets out in “Rhetorics Fast and Slow.” As Faigley’s piece makes clear, a good story and a strong sense of place are needed to combat the debilitating feeling “that nothing can be done,” the overwhelming feeling of “inevitability” that

pervades our culture. Fast rhetorics are manifestation of a culture that suffers from attention deficit disorder, a culture where things are quickly used and discarded. . . . We need pedagogies that encourage students to develop a sense of place, a sense of stewardship, a sense of equity, and a sense of connectedness to the world around them. (9)

The incapacitating inevitabilities of our times call upon us to develop emotionally and socially engaged modes of scholarly and pedagogical intervention. As Gane discusses, the pace of information technologies imposes the prevailing sociocognitive order upon our thinking. If we are to contend with the speed of digital technologies in ways that can help us bolster our reflective capacities, we need to start by acknowledging that “with the accelerated implosion of time-space it is becoming increasingly difficult to position critique outside that which it seeks to attack: the information order” (Gane 22). Laquintano and Vee give us a powerful sense of the algorithmic logic that drives that order to help us understand the “current media ecology” (51). Fast media and System 1 thinking overwhelm us with fleeting experiences that rush over us in ways that can overpower our reflective capacities. This fleeting immediacy crowds out the spaces where we and our students carve out time to learn together. Fast thinking and social networks transfix us with their speed, and our best hope of fixing them is to engage with our place in time. To draw upon local knowledge and situated modes of action, we need to deepen and expand our collaborations with our broader communities, including the alienated constituencies whom progressive commentators, educators, and activists failed to engage in the last election. This need is being addressed by our discipline’s increasing attention to civic engagement, as is discussed in Christopher Minnix’s article on how conservatives are using fake news accounts of “the new civics” to undermine the standing of public institutions of learning.

Terms of Engagement

As Minnix discusses, a national survey in 2017 found that only 36% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents see colleges and universities as having a positive effect (Pew Research Center). These negative attitudes have followed upon the assaults on higher education that science-deniers and cultural conservatives launched in the “culture wars” of the 1980s. Those wars have widened as libertarians and authoritarian populists have made common cause with social conservatives. These attacks are not skirmishes around the borders of the educated public and public education. Populist anti-intellectualism is a central dynamic of the postmodern public itself according to Frederic Jameson’s “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.” Jameson characterized the surging Reagan-Thatcher neoliberalism of the 1980s as a rising “populist rhetoric” aimed at arousing the resentments of alienated consumers with anti-intellectual attacks on the rationalism and formalism of the educated public (14-15). Jameson called upon academics to give up the pretense of maintaining a “critical distance” from these social movements because we are all “immersed in postmodernist space,” and the public is indifferent to “old fashioned ideological

critique” (86; see also Latour). Given this state of affairs, the critical imperative is to think with and not just against. In his retrospective “Revisiting Postmodernism,” Jameson noted that such dialectical engagements require us to remember that “pedagogy is not inflicting discipline but awakening interest” (Baumbach 127). To awaken students to the need to rethink their assumptions, we should move past the all-too-common liberal tendency to assume that all well-informed people think as we do and acknowledge that liberals and conservatives often have different moral compasses.

While conservatives and liberals both engage in motivated cognition, they are motivated by different concerns. Haidt and other social psychologists have found that you can predict people’s politics by simple observational examinations of whether their eyes linger longer over a negative image such as a car accident or a person eating worms (Dodd et al.; Smith et al.). In fact, such observations can predict people’s political orientation with more certainty than knowing their parents’ political orientation (Laber-Warren). A rich and varied array of experiments has documented that liberals and conservatives literally look at the world differently: conservatives tend to be more anxious, risk adverse, and orderly, while liberals are more open to experience and generally more optimistic (Jost et al.). Haidt’s *Righteous Mind* maps out the systematic differences in how liberals and conservatives think about values by reviewing experiments in which people were presented with moral quandaries and then asked why it would be right or wrong to respond in a particular way (see also Haidt’s “New Synthesis in Moral Psychology”). For example, after a couple’s pet dog has been killed by a car, they decide that it could be good to eat it (as they have heard is done in other cultures). The test subjects are asked whether that would be wrong, and if so why. Respondents were also asked to make the same assessment of other hypotheticals, for example whether it would be wrong for grown siblings to have sex (using appropriate birth control). From the justifications that people offered, Haidt concluded that liberals tend to be more motivated by a concern for harm and violations of rights, while conservatives are less narrow-minded and consider a wider range of considerations, most notably sanctity, duty, and authority.

If we consider the differing motivations of conservatives and liberals, we may be better able to respond to the motivations that guide the assaults on higher education. According to Minnix, groups such as the National Association of Scholars (NAS) have positioned “global higher education as . . . disloyal” (65) and un-American. Following in the fake news tradition of science deniers, such attacks appeal to conservative anxieties by depicting higher education as a threat to traditional authorities. These nativist attacks have come to focus on civic engagement because it is seen to be vital to progressive efforts to teach critical thinking and multiculturalism. To defend those efforts, Minnix argues for the sort of dialectical response that Jameson envisioned. Quoting from Chantal Mouffé’s *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, Minnix calls for a “dual movement” that combines critical interventions and “re-articulations,” with the latter including both developing student-engagement programs and getting involved in “agonistic” public debates. As Minnix discusses, the “global turn” is an outgrowth of universities’ broader efforts to expand their community partnerships, for example in programs dedicated to service learning, educational outreach, and transnational research. Universities have expanded such articulation programs to build public support in response to lost state funding and declining federal grant revenues. Conservative attacks on these sorts of programs

hit universities at a strategic juncture where vital social movements, interdisciplinary collaborations, and institutional needs are converging in ways that open up transformative potentials as well as critical vulnerabilities.

The potentials of the “engaged university” are emerging as an historical alternative to the traditional research university that relied upon steady state funding and research rankings and revenues in ways that have disoriented our intellectual inquiries from our institutional work (Watson). Few disciplines are more pivotal to this historical transition than rhetoric and composition. Many college composition programs have broader outreach and bridge programs than any other unit except math, which has been able to underwrite such programs with funding from NSF and other sources. Our gateway role in general education also locates our field at a strategic position amidst these broader socio-institutional changes. Our strategic location is precisely why leading compositionists such as Veronica House are being targeted by NAS for having developed innovative programs such as the Writing Initiative for Service and Engagement at the University of Colorado at Boulder. As Minnix discusses, such “articulations” have transformative possibilities because writing program administrators have the expertise and engagements to build interdisciplinary collaborations with social justice and human rights programs in ways that have the potential to reorient writing program toward the “ecological” models of networked literacy that House has presented as a successor to textualist models of writing (House).

Minnix’s article expands upon the analyses of Craig and Laquintano and Vee by helping us understand the broader postmodern challenge of moving beyond critiques of information literacy to think not just against but with the flow of networked literacies. Research on motivated cognition and social psychology has the same sort of historic potential that moral psychologists such as David Hume had in the eighteenth century, when related works such as Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* instituted an epistemological framework that shifted our discipline’s standpoint from the speaker at the podium to the reader before the page. We are experiencing a comparable historical transition. While we have worked through the implications of the “death of the author,” we are still grieving the death of the reader. Cultural studies has helped us expand our field of study to include social as well as print texts, but print literacies continue to haunt our field of study in the ways that Laquintano and Vee note. The articles in this issue expand our field of vision by looking to fake news and robotized publics for models of authorship akin to other hacker forms of network literacy. Rather than continuing to assume a modern rationalist standpoint on such models of knowledge in the making, we should expand our attention to the symbolic dynamics of motivated cognition to consider how we can motivate students to slow down and care enough to engage with others. This line of approach can help us revitalize the relationships between rhetoric and moral philosophy that have been critical at generative points in the history of our discipline, as evident in the psychological focus of formative works such as Kenneth Burke’s *Rhetoric of Motives*.

Caring Enough to Listen

You persuade [people] only insofar as you can talk [their] language by speech, gesture, tonality,

order, image, attitude, identifying your ways with [theirs] (Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* 55).

Riche's examination of the "rhetorical vulnerability" that arises when we listen to others provides a timely conclusion for this issue because higher education has never been more vulnerable, and liberals' failure to listen to alienated voters has contributed to the rise of authoritarian populism. Given the racist, sexist, and nativist tendencies of that social movement, we are likely to want to respond in the way that Riche initially considers. Riche opens his essay by noting that he was tempted to respond to campus preachers of prejudice "with a well-reasoned, well-researched argument" of "the kind I push my students to prefer in my writing courses" (84). Riche's piece invites us to think past our disciplinary bias toward "rhetorical agency" to consider the "rhetorical vulnerability" we open ourselves up to when we listen to others. This distinction parallels Burke's contrast between persuasion and identifications with others' "conditions, states of mind," and social affinities (56). Burke's *Rhetoric of Motives* examines how we come to identify with others as we work our way through the "human barnyard" to translate our values into action in contested situations. While conservatives and liberals may be motivated by differing presuppositions, the process of haggling through our differences can open up shared possibilities. As Riche discusses, composition classes provide a vital opportunity to build spaces where people take the time to listen to each other.

Riche argues for following through on rhetoric's traditional attention to audiences to build on the attention to "rhetorical listening" that Krista Ratcliff and others have established. This shift in perspective acknowledges that it is not the speaker but the listeners who are essential in a dialogue. In their absence, there is only monologue. To develop "reciprocal rhetorics" that center on becoming responsive rather than simply being persuasive, Riche draws on Diane Davis's *Inessential Solidarity* to consider the existential challenges of forging strategic alliances across political and cultural differences. Davis looks to Emanuel Levinas's philosophy of ethics to argue for a rhetoric of "response-ability" that is attuned to our transactions with others. Amidst such interactions, according to Riche, we find ourselves embedded in "a larger web of social relations, contingencies, and interdependencies" (85). Riche challenges us to accept our precarious positions amidst networks in which "interlocutors, audiences, and even bystanders" become "vulnerable to both verbal and nonverbal forces and influences" (90). Instead of trying to critique such forces and ideologies from a distance in the way that Jameson noted was no longer possible for postmoderns, Riche argues for thinking not against but with diverse viewpoints by accepting the vulnerabilities of opening ourselves up to listening to others.

Riche outlines a pedagogy of listening that is attuned to the give and take of the human barnyard. That pedagogy is exemplified by the simple act of listening that Riche practices by having students read their papers aloud and observe how others respond to them. Many of us have observed the power of such moments. As we were drafting this essay, Adele was reminded of how a student in one of her first classes at the University of Arizona became so engaged with workshopping drafts and sharing ideas with classmates that for years afterwards she kept coming back to engage in such discussions over coffee to brainstorm and get feedback. In a recent discussion, Adele asked the student what aspects of her class had the most lasting impact. The student observed that she had begun the semester just listening enough to think of a comeback but had learned to listen to

understand why someone believes as they do, and to see if their thoughts align with her own. The student remembered that reading drafts of classmates' papers had helped her to stop and listen rather than jumping to take sides. Such moments are so familiar in our classrooms that we need to remind ourselves how rare they are in our society, and how vital they are to helping people slow down, reflect and actually listen to others.

Riche's essay serves as a reminder to that. His piece also highlights a more positive dimension of motivated cognition: while we all seek to confirm the prejudices of the groups with whom we identify, that tendency can make us responsive to communities of practice that take the time to work on the craft of listening. Overviews of social psychology such as Elizabeth Kolbert's "Why Facts Don't Change Our Minds" document that we are depressingly indifferent to informed deliberations that challenge our presuppositions. This fact should not really be all that surprising to us, because rhetoricians have always had a three-dimensional understanding of public discourse. Since ancient times, we have understood that logical appeals depend upon our identification with the ethos of speakers and our feelings for the morals and mores of our communities. Moral psychologists such as Haidt renew our understanding of the rhetorical dimensions of human reasoning by reviewing the evolutionary origins of how our thinking is shaped by our identifications with our lived communities (see also Mercier and Sperber). While irrationally adhering to false news can appear to be a maladaptive response that could endanger the health and wellbeing of individuals in threatening situations, that same tendency can be seen to have powerful collective benefits by building the sort of "inessential solidarity" that Davis and Riche discuss. Evolutionary psychologists provide us with interactional models of human reasoning that highlight how our brains function, not in the individualistic manner of rational decision making that was assumed by modern philosophers, but in the social transactional manner that rhetoricians have long recognized, and which is powerfully apparent in the collaborative work of composition classrooms.

The articles that follow document how powerfully positioned we are to respond to the populist authoritarianism that has made fake news such a threat to informed deliberations on the challenges of our times. The partisan conflicts between liberals and conservatives challenge us to confront the disconnects between fast media and slow thinking to reflect upon how our thinking is motivated by our need to confirm our social identifications. Whether we are motivated by a concern for human rights or traditional authorities, we need to recognize that we are not as reasonable as we tend to presume when we look to critical analysis and close reading to change our students' minds. Our studies of rhetoric and our work with knowledge in the making provide us more personally and institutionally engaging ways to respond to libertarian assaults on institutions of public learning. As the essays in this issue discuss, such responses depend upon how willing we are to listen to how our students and our constituencies think. In the "human barnyard," the liberal appreciation for the diversity of the lived experience and human rights can be brought into conversation with the conservative values of sanctity, adherence to tradition, and deference to group norms. As the essays in this issue amply document, the challenge of our time is to practice listening and learning from each other so that we can discover our shared potentials and resist the authoritarian forces that seek to divide us.

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