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The Limits of Critical Rhetoric: Towards a Postcritical Orientation

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THE LIMITS OF CRITICAL RHETORIC: TOWARDS A POSTCRITICAL ORIENTATION

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Abstract

In 1989, Raymie McKerrow's essay "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis" served as a culmination for a new mode of rhetorical analysis that would reshape the field in the decades following. His essay combined the works of Michel Foucault and other rhetoric scholars such as Michael McGee, Maurice Charland, and Philip Wander to create the method of discourse critique called "critical rhetoric." Essential to this practice are McKerrow's equally important and interrelated "critique of domination," "critique of freedom," and "permanent criticism." These components respectively help critics identify where social change should occur within discourses of power, motivate realignments of power for the better, and avoid absolutist determinations of truth. However, the tendency in critical rhetoric's legacy has been on the critique of domination while the utility of the critique of freedom has been unexplored, thereby limiting the utility and purpose of critical rhetoric. In this thesis, I draw on Rita Felski's argument that emphasizing the hermeneutics of suspicion is limiting for critique to similarly argue that emphasizing the critique of domination is limiting for critical rhetoric. Felski offers "postcritical reading" as an alternative mode of critique that incorporates affective engagement and aesthetic dimensions. Building from Felski's and McKerrow's work, I offer a mode of critique called a "postcritical orientation" motivated by my notion of "permanent conversation," to explore alternative possibilities for critical rhetoric to enhance human social relations through and beyond critique. My postcritical orientation centers around Foucault's self-care for others while the permanent conversation engages with the "others of discourse" based on Emmanuel Levinas' moral philosophies and the stoic egalitarian notion of *sermo*. To illustrate how my contribution would effect social change by enhancing human social relations, I discuss the works of Tony Adams and Deeyah Khan as respective scholarly and documentary film exemplars of this mode of critical engagement.

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Introduction: Critical Rhetoric and the Question of Purpose

One of the questions humanities and liberal arts scholars must contend with is the question of purpose in their work. In the academy, scholars of philosophy, literature, and communication must occasionally justify their work by arguing for its purpose. Whether it is in response to a challenging student or skeptical family member or friend, we must sometimes answer the questions: What exactly is it you do? How does this apply to "the real world?" Answers to these questions may subjectively seem self-evident; however, they are legitimate questions that deserve answering, and our responses vary depending on discipline and area of expertise. Aside from the specifics of one's scholarly work, the purpose it serves can often be explained by relating it to "real world" phenomena.

As a rhetorical scholar my area of interest is informed by Raymie McKerrow's influential 1989 essay "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," which effectively helped launch a new mode of critique for the discipline.[1] His essay built upon the work of multiple scholars publishing in the latter portion of the 20th century and his term "critical rhetoric" has maintained its relevance in the field over the decades. Among its many insights, the essay offers two major process contributions: the critique of domination, a "process of demystifying conditions of domination," and the critique of freedom, which "promotes a realignment in the forces of power that construct social relations."[2] The purpose of these dual critical faculties, he states, "is to understand the integration of power/knowledge in society – what possibilities for change and integration invites or inhibits and what intervention strategies might be considered appropriate to effect social change."[3] These quotes suggest critical rhetoric is meant to help scholars unveil the obscure manner in which authoritative forces exert power over individuals, and examine ways of recalibrating displays of power to achieve social change where it is most needed.

Moreover, McKerrow suggests this work must be sustained through "permanent criticism – a self-reflexive critique that turns back on itself even," as it promotes alternative power alignments through the critique of freedom.[4] This sentiment propels critique to be wary of possible abuses of power; however, it is also recursive, meaning critique is an inherently repetitive process that leads to further critique. In summary, critical rhetoric is executed is by critiquing discursive formations, or virtually any communicative act; written, spoken, performed, and otherwise, and subsequently, intervention is posited through the critique of freedom; a perpetual process of critique and intervention.

How does a scholarly endeavor like critical rhetoric help us understand social problems faced in day-to-day life beyond the academy? Why is it important? To illustrate the relevance of applying critical rhetoric to societal problems, I relate it to a personal experience with potentially broad resonance. I refer to the experience of living a lifestyle mired in stagnation by forces outside of one's control, and of seeking the means to change life's circumstances for the better. This is in reference to my experience working at MGM Resorts International, an organization that wields broad discursive power over its vast workforce.

I worked at MGM from 2018 to 2020, playing a small role in their corporate HR office for some 80,000 MGM employees spread across the United States. The work was pretty standard of corporate office call-center gigs: answer as many phone calls as possible from 9am to 5pm broken up by an hour lunch break, go home at the end of your shift, rinse and repeat the next day. Of note was the illusive ways power was exercised over MGM employees, which held material implications for the daily conditions they experienced. Employees were expected to conform to the rules and regulations devised by a group of executives with whom they would seldom, if ever, communicate. For example, employees were expected to spend their time

answering an average of 25 to 30 phone calls per day, and when I first started working at MGM, there was no set guidelines for using the restroom. Employees were allowed to maintain their bodily functions as needed. Eventually, when answered calls were not meeting volume expectations, a new rule was implemented via email directive that restricted bathroom use to a maximum of 15 minutes per day.

From a critical perspective, this situation can be looked at from the critique of domination. On the surface, restricting bathroom usage was clearly an expression of power justified by the corporate demand for processing an ever-greater quantity of phone calls. From another view, it signifies corporeal discipline: employees have diminished agency over deciding when they exercise a basic bodily function. The relationship between corporate ideology and employee perspectives suggests the bodily needs of employees are quantifiable in the effort to reach a goal which does not benefit them directly. This critique of bathroom restriction reveals within the email discourse an ideological motivation – more efficiency! – informed by a power structure which places values of the corporate entity over those of the employees. As one example of many possible discourses expressed by MGM's corporate ideology, the bathroom mandate illustrates how discursive forces delimit the agency for employees to exercise a range of human functions. The incentive of the critique of this domination is to approach texts intent on identify illusive, subqualities of discourses of power such as MGM's mandate. In this regard it is complementary to Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion; a kind of textual analysis where suspicious reading aims to reveal hidden meanings embedded in language.[5] Given the ubiquity of discourse within hierarchical structures, McKerrow's process could be implemented ad infinitum, perpetually finding confirmation for one's suspicion, positing an ethos of distrust. This domination critique thus recursively identifies locations where change should occur for the

betterment of employees or individuals writ large, but as an interpretive metric it does not emphasize *how* change is enacted beyond the act of critique.

Critiquing domination is one feature of critical rhetoric, and the critique of freedom is an equally important counterpart that aims to realign the forces of power that construct positive social relations. How does one exercise agency within the MGM system to achieve positive change? Or, in other words, as McKerrow and Art Herbig have put this sense of agency in the critique of freedom process:

> [On the] freedom to become other than what you are: It is 'power from within.' Expressed creatively, it is the power that allows you to challenge yourself, to seek your own future – irrespective of the forces that may be allied against you. It is the power that offers us personal agency in the sense of a 'freedom to' assert our right to be taken seriously, to engage the world on our own terms.[6]

Taken in this light, the critique of freedom means responding to one's circumstances and actualizing a different future by exercising available agencies. For MGM employees, the options to exercise agency irrespective of forces allied against them are quite limited. One could work their way up the ladder to an executive position and thereby widen one's sphere of influence, but that would be a substantial commitment with limited guarantees. Another option would be to move across departments to access potentially different power relations that allow for greater freedom. However, they would still need to contend with the overarching power structure that dominates the entirety of the corporation. A third more substantial option would be to risk the stability of having a full-time job in order to make good on the rhetoric of opportunity by opting out and searching for new means of sustenance. This third option is the one I and many other employees chose to actualize in response to the organization's capricious domination. I needed more space to explore and grow, and so I left MGM in pursuit of a master's degree in communication studies thereby exemplifying the critique of freedom.

The point to emphasize is how, by exiting MGM, I was able to pursue an alternative future for myself within a broader discursive network. It would not have been possible without the recommenders to which I am indebted, the social systems which provided access to study for and take the GRE, and the reviewers of my letter of intent, to name a few contributing individuals and collectives. Understood through the critique of freedom, my departure from MGM to start graduate school resulted in a realignment of the forces of power that constructed the social relations in which I was embedded. Therefore, this example of understanding my experience in terms of critical rhetoric – one which could be replaced with myriad examples of individuals in similar circumstances – illustrates how critical rhetoric has purchase in tangible lived experiences. Moreover, it would apply less specifically to this scenario if not for the critique of freedom, as critiquing domination relates to many other analytical modes of reasoning, such as ideological critique. This is to suggest the critique of freedom is a unique component of critical rhetoric, one that has been slighted in comparison to its counterpart, and merits further consideration.

This personal anecdote is representative of my thesis' concern to examine the recursive limits of the critique of domination, and to explore possibilities for where the critique of freedom might yet be applied. To build this argument requires first establishing its rationale, namely that critical rhetoric has been limited by some of its more recursive, or self-fulfilling, faculties around the critique of domination. This concern has been similarly registered by McKerrow and Herbig in their 2020 essay reflecting on critical rhetoric's legacy:

> The emphasis, and this has been the case since 1989, has almost exclusively been on ways of ending oppression – seeking to overturn dominant forces allied against us… it has resulted in excellent work over the years [but] to isolate liberation as the sole focus may well leave us without clear answers to a most important question: What's next? What do we do now? What do we become? And, most importantly, are we done?[7]

The legacy of critical rhetoric, in short, has prioritized the critique of domination over the critique of freedom as the main path toward effecting social change. However, recursive critical readings in the domination mode have limited ability to answer the questions McKerrow and Herbig posit; they largely fail to conjure trajectories worth following *after* critique itself. As such, this project seeks to explore those questions and provide one possible trajectory by examining and extending the critique of freedom through what I shall call, following Rita Felski, a postcritical orientation. The work of literary theorist Rita Felski is important to this conversation, as she discusses how critique *itself* can be limiting.[8] She aligns much contemporary critique with the hermeneutics of suspicion to illuminate how suspicion often limits critical work to bad faith readings, seeking to establish certain ends such as distrusting the intent of texts and recursively identifying constructs in a network of near impenetrable power. She offers postcritical reading as an alternative model for critics informed by notions of affective engagement and acknowledged attachment to try and get around the limits of suspicious reading. Additionally, her use of the "post" prefix is an important move as it denotes a practice that places more emphasis on the creative faculties enabled *after* critique rather than denoting a practice which enables *further* critique. Felski's argument on critique's limits and offering of postcritical reading are important for this project and serve as useful starting points for considering the limits of critical rhetoric followed by a possible direction for finding more balance with the critique of freedom.

The other important component to this project's contribution comes from McKerrow's notion of "orientation" for practicing critical rhetoric which speaks to a critic's relation to (the others of) discourse. For example, when I applied a critique of domination to MGM's regulatory bathroom rules, I approached the discourse with the intent to demystify how it exercised power.

On the other hand, when I applied the critique of freedom, I approached the discourse intent on finding available means to exercise agency in such limited circumstances. In other words, the orientation a critic deploys when critiquing discourse will inform the outcomes and implications of said critique. This is a component of McKerrow's critical rhetoric I wish to build upon in this thesis to help inform a possible trajectory for critical rhetoric to follow.

My thesis builds beyond the limits of the recursive critique of domination, rooted in a hermeneutics of suspicion, by proposing a postcritical orientation as one possible direction for critics to take after critique. This concept is informed by Felski's postcritical reading as an alternative critical model and McKerrow's critical orientation as the way critics relate to and approach discourse. As an extension of the critique of freedom the postcritical orientation exercises agency by engaging with the others of discourse to cooperatively create social change by enhancing social relations. As a "post-" orientation, it informs how critics extend themselves through and beyond the act of critique. This extension is positioned (oriented) in relation to texts, discourses, and artifacts as *extensions* of others. The orientational element speaks to what a critic brings into the critical encounter as a participating social agent, understood through their disposition (how you are "facing" the text), attitude (how you intend to interpret the text), and mood (how you are receiving the text). The means for social change are practiced through the permanent conversation: a rhetorical praxis for ongoing ethical engagement with others through an egalitarian conversation via discourse. Its purpose is to build connections with others to strengthen social relations, and is therefore outwardly "other-reflexive," instead of McKerrow's self-reflexive permanent criticism. In essence, this argument rests on an understanding that critics are relationally connected with others who are implicated by discourse being critiqued.

This notion suggests critics might inspire change by building productive relationships through a communicative channel with the others of discourse.

Providing a postcritical orientation as one possible direction first requires understanding what critical rhetoric offers and how its capacity to effect social change has been limited by its singular focus on hidden structures of domination. Therefore, the first chapter of this project engages with the work of literary theorist Rita Felski, to help frame the conversation around the limits of critical rhetoric. Her analysis of suspicious reading will inform the first Chapter's discussion of historical trends in the literature of critical rhetoric. As a product resulting in a multitude of critical work in the latter half of the 20th century – from Philip Wander, Michael McGee, Maurice Charland, and several others – critical rhetoric, broadly construed, conveys many analytical features such as ideology critique, constitutive rhetoric, and the moral imperatives for critique. These features will be discussed further in Chapter I, along with the recursive trends they inherent.

Further, Chapter I discusses the critical rhetoric literature published in the decades following McKerrow's 1989 article. From the critique of vernacular discourse to participatory critical rhetoric, this mode of critique has increased its relevance since first being introduced to the field.[9] However, my argument maintains that there are persistent recursive limits to the range of critical rhetoric literature understood through disposition, attitude, and mood. Lastly, Chapter I returns to Felski's postcritical reading to explore what might be available to critics outside of suspicious reading. She discusses post-historicist criticism, actor-network theory, and affective engagement to convey a notion of context as "entanglement" with texts. This informs a critical orientation predisposed for receptive, optimistic, and hopeful reading to promote affective hermeneutics through and beyond critique.

The purpose of a postcritical orientation is to invite a creative mode of engaging with others via discourse critique as a communicative extension. The theoretical foundations and rhetorical praxis of this contribution are developed in Chapter II. Along with disposition, attitude, and mood, an orientation aimed toward enhancing social relations presumes a certain subjective stance as well. Returning to the work of Michel Foucault, which greatly inspired McKerrow's original essay, I suggest that the optimal subjective stance for a postcritical orientation is one of self-care for others. The sensibility of caring for oneself *for* others seeks to enhance social relations from inside-out. Conducive to enhancing relationships are themes of receptivity, optimism, and hope. Translated through disposition, mood, and attitude, these themes have productive implications for postcritical engagement.

Moreover, Chapter II discusses permanent conversation as a rhetorical praxis to help achieve this productive end. This feature is informed by the moral philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas that speak to the metaphysics of ethical face-to-face engagements with others. He emphasizes the need for individuals to perceive others as infinite beings which cannot be reduced to their internal definitions. In other words, my internal understanding of another person's identity cannot fully capture their infinite essence, and therefore limiting them to my internal definition inhibits my ability to "see" them in their entirety, thereby inhibiting ethical engagement. Levinas' work is therefore complementary to theorizing receptive modes of ethically communicating via critical discourse. The praxis element is informed by Michele Kennerly's analysis of *sermo* that entails an egalitarian arrangement. Informed by Ciceronian literature, *sermo* conveys a conversational approach to working through social problems where each voice has value and no one voice is asserted as dominant. In relation to a postcritical situation, a critic would enact *sermo* by discursively engaging with their interlocutor as a valued

other worthy of reaching. Conceiving the others of discourse by these faculties promotes an orientation seeking to strengthen social relations.

After establishing these foundational components, Chapter II discusses the work of Tony Adams (scholarship) and Deeyah Khan (documentary film) as exemplars of a postcritical orientation and permanent conversation. Adams' work offers forgiveness as a possible direction for critics to take postcritique. He then demonstrates what forgiveness would look like if used in a hypothetical interaction with others who are implicated by his critique. His example illustrates what the permanent conversation might look like in an academic setting, while Deeyah Khan's work reaches outside the academy. Khan is a human rights activist and documentary filmmaker who engages directly with political extremists to understand what motivates their behaviors. While conversing with them, she brings empathy and respect to the exchange despite their extreme and racist perspectives and ways of life. Her profound approach is effective at fostering bonds of friendship, such that she is able to influence extremists to abandon their hateful beliefs. In this regard, Khan exemplifies the pinnacle achievement of a postcritical orientation built around a permanent conversation open to engaging a range of others. Moreover, Khan and Adams help illuminate what dispositions, attitudes, and moods are available to the postcritical orientation – such as gentleness, openness, and understanding – which help to guide exchanges aimed toward enhancing social relations.

Following Chapter II are some concluding thoughts and limitations of this project that offers one possible answer to the question of what comes after critique. Reviewing the literature of critical rhetoric to understand its recursive limits is meant to enhance our self-awareness as critics and foster exploration into postcritical questions. It is to suggest in true hermeneutical fashion that there is a threshold to critique which must be breached if meaningful change is to be

actualized. My overall purpose with this project is to deeply engage what is made possible when starting at the critique of freedom and moving into the realm of discourse that must be navigated after critique. By offering a postcritical orientation as one possible direction for critical rhetoric, I hope to construct and inspire an alternative conversational ethos. The purpose of this contribution is to empower critics by offering new ways to exercise agency through discursive mediums to inspire and strengthen productive relationships with the others of discourse, thereby realizing effective social change.

Chapter I: The Limits of Critical Rhetoric

The field of rhetorical studies has evolved significantly from its disciplinary origins in speech communication almost a century ago. Dilip Gaonkar for example, suggests the discipline of rhetoric as we currently know it, originated in the early twentieth century, with studies of the pedagogical practices and history of oratory.[10] Rhetoric was traditionally more concerned with effective persuasive strategies for public speaking understood through historically influential speeches. Eventually, students of rhetoric started looking at examples of oratory as discrete artifacts worthy of critical attention, which developed into the practice of rhetorical criticism.[11] Scholars would analyze historical speeches for their effective use of persuasive and rhetorical devices as a meaningful lens to understand how speeches came to be influential. Then, in the later portion of the 20th century, a group of scholars took what would eventually be called the critical turn and began shifting their focus beyond the appraisal of specific texts into the critique of rhetorical discourse broadly speaking.[12] Critique in this context asks of discourse a different set of questions than traditional speech criticism does. Among many things, doing critique means questioning the assumptions on which discourse is grounded; assumptions about the agential scope of language, or the objective standing of the critic-scholar, or about the ends of critique itself. One of the outcomes that has resulted from merging critique with the rhetorical analysis of discourse is the practice we now call "critical rhetoric."

Although the term was coined by Raymie McKerrow in 1989, the practice of critical rhetoric represents a confluence of scholarship that dramatically shifted the discipline. In their 2020 article, Brandon Daniels and Kendall Phillips explain how McKerrow's work was a culmination of several critical voices at the turn of the century:

> Raymie McKerrow's (1989) conception of critical rhetoric represented an important moment in the development of late-20th-century rhetorical studies.

> Building on the ideological turn (Wander, 1983), feminist standpoint theory (Hartsock, 1985), and concerns about postmodern culture (McGee, 1982, 1984), the notion of critical rhetoric forged these disparate fragments together within a broadly Foucauldian sensibility… This effort was conducted, at least in part, as a response to a growing sense that poststructural insights posed a substantial, indeed, profound, challenge to traditional notions of the humanities.[13]

Critical rhetoric was thus tapping into a shared desire among scholars to reorient the theoretical foundations and ways of enacting rhetorical scholarship at that time. Among the many contributors to this movement, McKerrow offered the Foucault-inspired "twin critiques of domination and freedom," which poised scholars to critique the ways discourse both limits (domination) and enables (freedom) specific constellations of meaningful actions.[14] Far from being the *only* contribution he makes with critical rhetoric, this practice has maintained its relevance in the field to this day. Demonstrating its staying power, Daniels and Phillips reflect on its influence stating, "In our view, critical rhetoric is a discursive practice positioned within the broader discourse of rhetorical studies and, indeed, one that has become commonplace… the term *critical rhetoric* has become the standard within the field's domains of practice."[15] Considering that statement was published in 2020, and McKerrow's essay in 1989 suggests there has since developed a considerable legacy for critical rhetoric.

How should we understand this legacy? What kinds of trends have emerged in critical rhetoric scholarship, and what are some implications on the broader diverse relations between individuals and the social? While answers may vary depending on who is asked, as previously noted, McKerrow and Herbig identified that one the emphatical trend for the past 33 years has been on the critique of domination thereby neglecting other faculties of critical rhetoric; most notably the critique of freedom.[16] I point this out not to brand the privileging of domination trend as a bad thing, as I agree with McKerrow and Herbig's follow up statement, "it has resulted in excellent work over the years…." The critique of domination is certainly an essential component

of critical rhetoric and remains just as important now as it was in 1989. However, as the following analysis shows, there has been a tendency for critical rhetorical scholarship to halt at the recursive function of critiquing ideological formations and the hidden ways power is expressed through discourse. I propose that this tendency has limited previous scholarships' capacity to offer positive contributions that speak to what we may become after a critique of hidden power has been made.

Broadly speaking, the critique of domination entails demystifying the ways in which discourse – ideologically tainted by discrete forms of power – inhibits our ability to live our fullest human expression in a socio-political network.[17] The work of demystification therefore requires a certain orientation poised to interpret hidden agendas and veiled ideologies within discourse. This orientation is complemented by a doubtful mood, which suggests clarity is gleaned through revealing a text's "true meaning." In this sense, it partakes of a "hermeneutics of suspicion," which literary theorist Rita Felski describes as, "the practice of reading texts against the grain to expose their repressed or hidden meanings."[18] As an orientation for critics, demystification is an interpretive lens for approaching texts, discourses, and artifacts with a skeptical disposition; it demands readiness, to discover and interrogate shadowy forces beyond the discourse's literal or surface appearance. This approach is necessary for unmasking oppression within the taken-for-granted; however, if it is critical rhetoric's primary emphasis, to suspiciously demystify discourses of power recursively, or ad infinitum to the point where it turns back even on itself, then we have to wonder what additional questions are being left unanswered, and what comes after the critique of domination? These questions guide this project overall and the first question is the subject for consideration in the present chapter.

Felski's reflective work on methodological trends in literary critique is similarly guided by the question of what is left out in suspicious styles of critique. For example, in *The Limits of Critique*, she argues the hermeneutics of suspicion is one critical orientation which combines "an attitude of vigilance, detachment, and wariness (*suspicion*) with identifiable conventions of commentary (*hermeneutics*) – allowing us to see that critique is as much a matter of affect and rhetoric as of philosophy or politics."[19] In this sense, suspicious interpretation is expressed through a certain disposition, attitude, and mood which inform critique and therefore its rhetorical implications. Felski explains that her goal in evaluating these limits, "is to de-essentialize the practice of suspicious reading by disinvesting it of presumptions of inherent rigor or intrinsic radicalism – thereby freeing up literary studies to embrace a wider range of affective styles and modes of argument."[20] She seeks to pivot away from the assumption that interrogating texts is necessary for meaningful interpretations to come forth. She offers "postcritical reading" as an alternative model for scholars, with the following propositions:

> Rather than looking behind the text – for its hidden causes, determining conditions, and noxious motives – we might place ourselves in front of the text, reflecting on what it unfurls, calls forth, makes possible… [in] recognition… of the text's status as coactor: as something that makes a difference, that helps make things happen…. And once we take on board the distinctive agency of [texts]… we cannot help orienting ourselves differently to the task of criticism.[21]

Through postcritical reading, Felski argues for a reorientation toward textual engagement that opens up possibilities for new revelations to be made through critique. Thus, her work questions what is left out of the hermeneutics of suspicion and explores an alternative model for critique through postcritical reading that enhances critical faculties to creatively make things happen with texts.

Given the parallels between Felski's suspicious reading and McKerrow's critique of domination, it is worth considering how the limits of the former might pertain to the latter.

Accordingly, in this chapter, I argue that Felski's analysis of suspicion's limits can illuminate similar limitations in the critique of domination described through mood, attitude, and disposition. Felski builds from these limitations to offer postcritical reading as an alternative model that readily engages in affective hermeneutics which will help indicate where further possibilities for critical rhetoric can be realized. Therefore, the first section of this chapter discusses how her work, specifically *The Limits of Critique*, can provide a lens for outlining some limits of the critique of domination. The primary features of this lens are the critical orientation understood through disposition, attitude, and mood. The second section will discuss the contributions of the critical turn, and by extension critical rhetoric, to show how the similarities between it and suspicious reading are warranted. This involves briefly considering the traditional modes of criticism being turned away from, followed by an appraisal of the contributions from influential scholars of the critical turn.

The third section discusses an abbreviated legacy of critical rhetoric from a "Felskian" lens to demonstrate how its influence in the field is yet limited by emphasizing the critique of domination. The purpose of this review is to show how critical rhetoric enhances our faculties to critique at a broad scale, but that emphasizing the recursive critique of domination limits potential applications to enable paths forward after critique. Finally, the fourth section discusses how Felski's argument for postcritical reading is helpful for considering what critical rhetoric can become if the emphasis is shifted to the critique of freedom and what comes after. This last section will serve as a bridge between the discussion on the limits of critical rhetoric to positing a postcritical orientation that engages what comes after critique. The aim is to establish that the critical rhetoric conversation can and should venture to build upon social relations through discursive postcritical engagements.

The Limits of Critique and The Suspicious Mood

In *The Limits of Critique*, Felski writes "about the role of suspicion in literary criticism" as expressed through the "mood and method" of critical work. Although literary study is her area of expertise, she maintains the trend of suspicious critique "reaches well beyond the confines of English departments," and her arguments "have a much broader purchase."[22] Hence, while she often speaks in terms of her own literary practices, the broader implications of her work span across fields and disciplines. Regarding the "role of suspicion," she is questioning and reappraising a genre of critique by emphasizing the rhetorical affect, "thought style," and "ethos of argument" perceivable within critical scholarship. Moreover, her discussion is around the attitude, disposition, tone, and orientation of critique and what those features suggest for the purposes and outcomes of critique. By focusing on these features, Felski builds an argument for an additional mode for performing criticism, called "postcritical reading," that incorporates affective engagement.[23] To help explain the impetus for her argument, Felski adapts Paul Ricoeur's phrase *hermeneutics of suspicion*, which emerged in Ricoeur's commentary on Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, to signify the kind of critical scholarship from which she is building.

Felski clarifies early on that, "'The hermeneutics of suspicion' is by no means a pejorative term – Ricoeur's stance toward the writings of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche is respectful, even admiring."[24] Noteworthy here is that Foucault, a central figure in McKerrow's critical rhetoric, was influenced by Marx and Nietzsche and Felski notes has extended a version of the hermeneutics of suspicion through his historical interpretations of power relations.[25] It will later be seen how this lineage of critical thought resonates within critical rhetoric, thereby reinforcing the utility of considering Felski with critical rhetoric. Additionally, the sentiment of "respectful and admiring" is something she maintains throughout her reexamination of

suspicious critique, which I wish to emulate in my treatment of critical rhetoric literature. From time to time, she even acknowledges that she has partook in suspicious text reading from which she is now trying to evolve.

As a signifier of a type of critique, the hermeneutics of suspicion speaks to, as previously mentioned, "an attitude of vigilance, detachment, and wariness (suspicion)…."[26] Therefore, we can think of suspicion as one possible attitudinal stance toward a text rather than the only mode of interpreting texts critically. This sensibility is similar to the critique of domination, which is one interpretive feature of critical rhetoric and not the only way to partake in it. To advance her project for providing additional means to critique, Felski reinforces that "[we] do not need to throw out interpretation but to revitalize and reimagine it."[27] But, what exactly is at stake with a suspicious reading and interpretation of a text? The answer to this question is the subject of Felski's first chapter.

In her first chapter, "The Stakes of Suspicion," Felski elaborates on how any act of critique is bound up with a critical mood informed by a Heideggerian formulation of mood. Felski suggests the following about mood as something which cuts across all forms of critique:

> [Mood] "sets the tone" for our engagement with the world, causing it to appear before us in a given light. Mood, in this sense, is a prerequisite for any form of interaction or engagement; there is, Heidegger insists, no moodless or mood-free apprehension of phenomena. Mood, to reprise our introductory comments, is what allows certain things to matter to us and to matter in specific ways.[28]

In this sense, mood is like our two-way perceptual filter that reveals certain things as important and other things as negligible or unacknowledged. Moreover, it is always already there, it is an unavoidable perceptual space that all humans occupy individually and therefore applies when we perform critical rhetoric. Concerning the critique of an object, "[the] notion of mood thus bridges the gap between thought and feeling. Mood accompanies and modulates thought; it affects how we find ourselves in relation to a particular object."[29] Mood therefore influences critique in two

ways; how we receive a text through critique and what we put into our interpretations. For example, if I am oriented through a hopeful mood, I may be more receptive to how the features of a text are revelatory and inspiring, whereas if I maintain a doubtful mood, I may not be as receptive to the texts uplifting features. These features are relayed through a critique's literary style, its use of certain metaphors and not others to create a specific "tonal atmosphere" informed by a critical attitude. This is an important feature to draw out of the implications of critical rhetoric in the critique of domination mode. How, then, does mood relate to suspicious reading of textual objects? Felski describes the complexities of suspicion to help us understand the implications of such readings.

Felski cites Alexander Shand to help describe suspicion as an orientation tied to an emotional disposition that frames the world in a negative light:

> [Shand] describes suspicion as an elusive and complex attitude, a secondary emotion composed out of basic affects such as fear, anger, curiosity, and repugnance. It is a sensibility that is oriented toward the bad rather than the good, encouraging us to presume the worst about the motives of others – with or without good cause.[30]

Based on this definition, suspicion becomes a subconscious motivator for how one interacts with others based on a collection of emotions that are at once investigative and recalcitrant. Importantly, suspicion helps promote vigilance in the face of the unknown and the potential harms that can come from naïve faith in others. It is an orientation that can protect an individual's integrity by anticipating the myriad possible dangers one can encounter in the world. In the context of critiquing domination, suspicion is useful for identifying how discourse limits human potential, thus promoting self-preservation, and creating space for growth. Therefore, in many respects, suspicious reading can be suitable for protecting one's identity and by extension livelihood but is limited in producing growth after critique which is an equally important consideration.

Suspicious reading is a strong orientation for what to expect from a text or object, justifiable for protecting and preserving a subject. Felski notes the contradictory aims inherent to a suspicious orientation, saying, "[on] the one hand, we distrust someone or something – and are tempted to steer clear of a potential source of danger. On the other hand, we are also compelled to keep a close eye on what bothers us, so as to prepare for the eventuality of an attack."[31] In this regard, suspicion urges us to be both strictly self-conscious of our own guardedness while also being exceedingly attentive to possible forms of danger lurking in discourse. However, Felski notes the premise on which our suspicious attentiveness rests is ambiguous, while suggesting the following as part of Shand's formulation:

> Shand's essay also alerts us to the salient contrast between suspicion in its everyday sense and its intellectual doppelganger. Suspicion, he observes, is synonymous with doubt and uncertainty; it springs from a lack of knowledge. To suspect something, after all, is not to know it for a fact: it is to speculate and second-guess rather than to be sure.[32]

Suspicion and all its moving parts then promote an anxious disposition between the self and the myriad negative possibilities. Additionally, Felski notes, "[as] a style of academic reading, however, the hermeneutics of suspicion knows its vigilance to be justified. Something, somewhere – a text, an author, a reader, a genre, a discourse, a discipline – is always already guilty of some crime."[33] This is the essential outcome of suspicious reading and points to the infinite project of interpreting texts through a hermeneutics of suspicion. In this attitudinal frame, the reason for suspicion is out there; we just have to find it, name it, demystify it, and reveal it, which recursively shapes the world that is created from a suspicious mood. One consideration in response to realizing the implications of suspicious reading is what it means for the affective outcomes of critique for both the critic and their audiences.

In her concluding chapter, Felski summarizes the limits of suspicious reading as being "one-sided" in its proclivity for "demystifying, subverting, and putting into question" the sub-

conscious motivations and implications of discourse.[34] In this sense suspicion is helpful when critiquing a text's unseen ideological ties and obscure, "microphysics of power," as a critic influenced by McKerrow might say; however, her concern is that suspicious reading potentially inhibits the affective possibilities of critical interpretation.[35]

Felski notes how suspicious reading that neglects affect and the aesthetic dimensions of texts "results in a mind-set…that blocks receptivity and inhibits generosity. We are shielded from the risks, but also the rewards, of aesthetic experience."[36] The critique of domination, for instance, has a disposition well adjusted for subverting texts for their face-value assertions in order to demystify expressions of power. The mood, we might say, is one of suspicion as informed by the notion that "power is pervasive" and can be identified in the very ubiquity of discourse colored by ideology.[37] The suspicious mood promotes vigilant attitude as well, to continuously question discourse for its hidden meanings. In many ways, each of these features make the critique of domination and the hermeneutics of suspicion so potent and capable of locating areas where social change is necessary. However, Felski reminds us there are limits to the choices made when we critique, which propels her to bring to the surface new possibilities for critique through postcritical reading (discussed in further detail later). The next section discusses the contributions of the critical turn and critical rhetoric in relation to Felski to illuminate the trends of disposition, attitude, and mood.

Critical Rhetoric From the Critical Turn

The critical turn signals a shift in rhetorical scholarship that took place in the latter decades of the 20th century. At the time, several scholars applied new schools of thought to the discipline and carved out a new approach to rhetorical criticism we now know as "critical rhetoric." Critical rhetoric is distinct from what is often dubbed "traditional" or "textual"

criticism that was the dominant form of rhetorical scholarship prior to the critical turn. Dana Cloud summarized this shift in the beginning of her 1994 essay responding to scholars of this new genre:

> This essay is addressed to the significant and growing minority of rhetorical scholars – Marxists, feminists, postmodernists, and other critics of the prevailing social order – who came to rhetorical studies out of the conviction that rhetoric provides a rich set of analytical and explanatory tools for social critique…In the wake of the ideological turn in rhetorical studies (Wander, 1983; McGee, 1984), a generation of scholars (Crowley, 1992; McGuire, 1990; Ono & Sloop, 1992) has crafted a 'critical rhetoric' (McKerrow, 1989) with the goal of claiming and analyzing discourses as sites of struggle over power.[38]

The minority of rhetorical scholars Cloud was referencing helped bridge the gap between rhetorical studies and various branches of critical theory. As Shierry Weber suggests, critical theory in the broad sense is concerned "with the emancipatory power of reflective thought. Critical Theorists have consistently pointed to the critical and dialectical activities of thought and have claimed that in liberating man from the domination of false conceptions they increase human freedom."[39] Critical *rhetoric* similarly advances the emancipatory project of critical theory by way of critiquing the rhetoric of public discourse.

Although the term was first coined in 1989 by Raymie McKerrow, the origins of critical rhetoric can be traced in scholarship spanning from the 1970s through the 1990s. Primary scholars that motivated this new form of critique, along with McKerrow, include Michael McGee, Maurice Charland, and Philip Wander. Each of these scholars contributed new dimensions for the rhetorical inquiry that were adapted by subsequent scholars such that their influence can still be seen in the field to this day. In his 1993 article "The Revival of Rhetoric, the New Rhetoric, and the Rhetorical Turn: Some Distinctions," Dilip Gaonkar provided a systematic review of the general trends in rhetorical studies since its inception as a standalone discipline.[40] He identified how the field originated with the Speech Communication discipline in

the first quarter of the 20th century; incorporating rhetorical studies for either teaching practical oratory skills or teaching the history of rhetoric. It was not until later in the 20th century, Gaonkar notes, that the practice of rhetorical criticism emerged:

> [Students of rhetoric] added a new arena of inquiry which gradually came to dominate the research activity within the field – the study of public address. They undertook to examine public discourse, especially political oratory, in its historical and biographical context. Such concentration on a specific object of study in turn gave rise to a distinctive mode of critical practice called 'rhetorical criticism'…It is by means of historical and critical study of public address more than any other subject that the American Speech Communication departments as a whole were able to place their distinctive stamp on the study of rhetoric.[41]

Gaonkar indicates here that rhetorical studies achieved the status of a standalone discipline largely through practicing rhetorical criticism of public discourse. Thus, the general character of what some consider "traditional" rhetorical criticism is centered around analyzing the rhetorical dimensions of individual speeches within specific historical contexts. This practice aimed toward objective, impersonal evaluations of speeches to understand effective oratory operating in a specific context. This contextual backdrop is helpful for partially understanding what scholars of the critical turn were pivoting away from; that is, the systematization of rhetorical criticism around isolated acts of speech as the primary locus of scholarly import.

Gaonkar describes how, as the century progressed, rhetorical figures he calls the "new rhetoricians" gradually expanded how rhetoric can be understood as an influential social force that shapes thought, behavior, and beliefs outside of public oratory. Among these scholars are Kenneth Burke, Richard Weaver, and Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca who offered "a new, conceptually refurbished rhetoric better adapted to the exigences of the modern age."[42] These thinkers would become influential to critical rhetoric as theoretical informants or opposition.[43] Although they were not unified in their approaches, Gaonkar notes a commonality among them "was a commitment to refocus contemporary attention on rhetoric in a world

increasingly dominated by science and the scientific method."[44] At the time, these new rhetoricians were responding to the horrors of war that the planet endured in the 20th century, reacting to it as an exigence for theorizing a rhetoric that could "negotiate the vexing questions of public life" and "promote social cohesion without erasing differences between the contending forces within and among communities."[45] This transition to expand rhetorical studies to address contemporary threats with new lenses, Gaonkar suggests, was crucial in paving the way for "the rhetorical turn," which captures part of the critical turn, that garnered yet another substantial shift in how rhetorical research was conducted.

Gaonkar describes "the rhetorical turn" as a "metadisciplinary move" that amplified the importance of rhetoric in both constructing political identities and sustaining political ideologies:

> The idea of a rhetorical turn involves a metadisciplinary move. It calls for a series of transcendences that set rhetoric free from its traditional confinement within the three distinctive fields of activity – education, politics, and literature…First, as a pedagogical practice, rhetoric is no longer viewed as a merely technical discipline for imparting communicative skills. It is now seen as the medium *par excellence* for molding the human personality…In the context of legal pedagogy…rhetoric is a 'constitutive art' that not only molds individual personality but creates and sustains culture and community…Second, rhetoric is transformed from a discursive instrument of politics into that which is constitutive of political discourse itself. This transformation is mediated through a certain equation between rhetoric, politics, and ideology.[46]

As a social force which molds human personality, rhetoric became "constitutive" such that it gives rise to new communities and political identities. In the realm of political discourse, rhetoric is enmeshed within ideological structures and "[by] the same logic, rhetorical analysis or criticism comes to be equated with ideological analysis and critique."[47] These conceptual moves that Gaonkar observes from a birds-eye-view came from scholars of the critical turn and would influence the practice of critical rhetoric henceforth. Moreover, his choice to use "metadisciplinary" to describe this shift entails a movement that takes concern with its own disciplinary practice. Thus, the critical turn as an extension of Gaonkar's rhetorical one, was

complemented by suspicious modes. Maintaining skepticism around the intentions of socio-political discourse complements interpretive faculties to unveil the presumptive notions hidden in the rhetoric of discourse. However, critical rhetoric scholars argued for that same skeptical approach can and should be applied to the discursive formations in established disciplinary practices. In this sense, they were self-reflexively endeavoring to circumvent stagnation to continue growing the field for the better. In this regard, suspicious reading was productive in that it helped birth a new trajectory for critical scholarship to follow.

For the purposes of this thesis, the final relevant illustration of how the critical turn diverged from traditional criticism was captured in the 1990 special issue of *Western Journal of Speech Communication*. The issue centered around two polarizing powerhouses of rhetorical studies at the turn of the century, Michael Leff and Michael McGee, the latter of which is important for the critical turn. John Campbell articulated the contrast between Leff and McGee when he introduced this special issue, stating:

> The contrasts between Leff and McGee are fundamental, thoroughgoing, and symmetrical…For Leff the proper object of analysis is the speech text situated in a specific historical context. For McGee the text is but a temporary and proximate site of a scene of rhetorical action that in principle ranges over space and time and is bounded only by the ideology of a people….[48]

While Leff advocated for extending traditional criticisms around singular texts in their historical contexts, McGee argued that modern discourse is "fragmented," which means historical notions of context must be rethought. Instead, he suggests, critics must *construct* texts and their context to offer meaningful interpretations of discourse.[49] In this way, McGee offered an expansive view where critics played a greater role in the text creation process as objects of critique that marks a separation from the traditional model. By integrating new constructive dimensions to rhetorical critique, scholars reoriented their relations to everyday materiality of discourse and its effect on the wider populations. This feature is important for practicing critical rhetoric in the broad sense,

as it is motivated by an understanding that power is as pervasive as discourse, existing in all spheres of society and culture, not just public address. However, this is only one feature of critical rhetoric, which was a culmination of scholarship from multiple contributors

Informed by critical theorists, additional work from McGee and Maurice Charland showed how discourse has material implications on the conditions of human life in a political system. As influential figures to the propagation of ideology critique in rhetoric studies, their work resonates through many of the advancements in critical rhetoric, writ large, therefore justifying analysis. In 1975 McGee published an essay called "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative" in which he advocated for a rhetorical understanding of "audience" and "the people" informed by social theories from Karl Marx and José Ortega y Gassett among others.[50] When describing the purpose of his essay McGee mentioned, "[the] essay incidentally explores one part of the reciprocal relationship between rhetoric and social theory – implicitly, it is suggested that a central concept in rhetoric ('audience/people') is better understood within the meanings and intentions of social philosophy than those of logic or the philosophy of science."[51] McGee argued for an alternative view of rhetorical analysis from the traditional criticism that speaks to the material and social implications of rhetorical discourse. Considering ideology in terms of rhetorical critique, according to Marxian theory (social philosophy), entails revealing the illusive mechanisms in discourse which constitute collective identities of peoples, groups, and communities. Here is an instance where ideology comes into play and would become central to the development of critical rhetoric, as an unseen rhetorical feature of discourse to be expanded on later by Charland and others.

In his 1987 article "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," Maurice Charland advanced an argument for "constitutive rhetoric" that borrows from Marxist

philosopher Louis Althusser's notion of subject creation through interpellation along with McGee's argument for rhetorical constructions of "people" as collectives. [52] Charland analyzed how the Canadian French-speaking province of Quebec garnered their independence in part by constructing the collective identity of "peuple québécois" through rhetorically constitutive acts. Starting with the creation of the political association Mouvement Souveraineté-Association (MSA), Quebec simultaneously declared their independence from Canada and constructed a new political identity as Charland writes: "With the *MSA*, a national identity for a new type of political subject was born, a subject whose existence would be presented as a justification for the constitution of a new state. Thus, the *MSA*'s declaration is an instance of constitutive rhetoric, for it calls its audience into being."[53] Therefore, Charland suggests that constitutive rhetoric provides means for subjects to construct their own identities in addition to enacting the material consequences of constructing a new nation-state.

After accounting for several instances where Quebec citizens advocated for their independence through political movements and rhetorical documents, Charland arrived at the following conclusion:

> Indeed, because the constitutive nature of rhetoric establishes the boundary of a subject's motives and experience, a truly ideological rhetoric must rework or transform subjects. A transformed ideology would require a transformed subject…Such a transformation requires ideological and rhetorical work [which can] proceed at the level of the constitutive narrative itself, providing stories that through the identificatory principle shift and rework the subject and its motives…[54]

Here, Charland indicates how there is a rhetorical dimension to transforming and constructing political identities bound to ideological structures. Moreover, Charland's innovative analysis of the peuple québécois expanded rhetorical criticism by connecting it with broader notions of ideology, subjectivity, and the materiality of discourse. In this sense, constitutive rhetoric nuances how power functions through rhetorical discourse to shape an individual's self-

conception. This realization is important for critical rhetoric as it informs how the unseen forces of ideology rhetorically influence material realities, thus adding a dimension for critique to interpret. Since constitutive rhetoric traffics in ideological critique it is also complemented by a suspicious approach to discourses seeking to reveal their undetected influence.

McGee continued to expand criticism through Marxian ideology when he published the 1980 essay "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology." In this paper he argued for the concept of "ideographs" expressed through "political language which manifests ideology" and that "[an] analysis of ideographic usages in political rhetoric…reveals interpenetrating systems or 'structures' of public motives."[55] By linking rhetoric with ideology McGee's argument for "ideographs" helped open the door for rhetorical criticism to engage in ideological critique. Here he explains what ideographs tell us about human social formations as politically and historically situated terms:

> I have argued here that the ideology of a community is established by the usage of [ideographs] in specifically rhetorical discourse…The ideographs used in rhetorical discourse seem structured in two ways: In isolation, each ideograph has a history, an etymology, such that current meanings of the term are linked to past usages of it diachronically. The diachronic structure of an ideograph establishes the parameters, the category, of its meaning. All ideographs taken together, I suggest, are thought at any specific 'moment' to be consonant, related one to another in such a way as to produce unity of commitment in a particular historical context.[56]

In this regard, the concept of the ideograph reveals new dimensions of meaning within discourse for scholars to analyze and interpret. The everydayness of ideographs suggests their pervasiveness in a subject's thoughts and motivating behaviors. In this sense, it heightens the relationship between subjects and ideological discourses of power serving a recursive approach that consistently reveals the inner workings of discursive domination.

Demonstrating its use for critique, John Lucaites and Celeste Condit constructed an ideographic analysis of <equality> in their 1990 essay called "Reconstructing <Equality>:

Culturetypal and Counter-Cultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision."[57] In this article Lucaites and Condit compared the rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X to demonstrate how they provided different conceptions of equality in their political rhetoric on black emancipation. Differentiating their notions of equality from the dominant conception of equality is crucial to Lucaites and Condit's argument. They state the ideograph of equality "functions implicitly as a rhetoric of control, requiring those who would achieve legitimacy to sublimate their 'difference' from the dominant ideology."[58] In this regard, there are three different narratives operating in this political discourse around equality; the dominant Anglo-American version, the Martin Luther King Jr. version (culturetypal), and the Malcolm X version (counter-cultural). Lucaites and Condit contend that this dialectical tension around equality is critical for MLK and Malcolm X to reform the public discourse around equality to work in favor of Black Americans.[59]

Their essay exemplifies how ideographic critique informs a broadened rhetorical understanding of our relationships with power, control, and domination in the struggle for equality and recognition of marginalized voices. Moreover, their analysis connotes critical rhetoric's increased interest in social change as the purpose of critique, but their discussion is in terms of things critics need to be wary of when evaluating productive social movements. In other words, their critique reveals how dominant ideologies constrict social movements in their own terms, such that in the pursuit of equality, there is a need to differentiate from the unseen, perhaps unknowable dominant form of equality. This sensibility suggests an understanding of productive social change according to its faculties to subvert domination thereby encouraging further suspicion of the ways domination is expressed in seemingly benign language.

Philip Wander was another critical turn scholar who argued for merging ideology with criticism. In his 1983 publication "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism," Wander advocated for stronger sensibilities for moral consequences of ideologically motivated actions of governing bodies: "Criticism takes an ideological turn when it recognizes the existence of powerful vested interests benefiting from and consistently urging policies and technology that threaten life on this planet, when it realizes that we search for alternatives."[60] This increased awareness that Wander argued for elicited a call for critics to engage in conscientious and purposeful criticism that grapples with moral imperatives embedded within cultural practices and beliefs. This sensibility would become a prime motivator for the critique of domination, which necessitates discourses of power to be demystified to understand how they influence social dynamics and material conditions. Wander's sentiments were echoed and further justified by McGee in his 1984 article response, and later by James Klumpp and Thomas Hollihan in their 1989 article "Rhetorical Criticism as Moral Action."[61] In McGee's response, he appreciated Wander for pushing rhetorical critics to acknowledge the "moral consequences" of critique in contrast with "counterfeit 'objectivity'" that was prevalent in traditionalist criticism at the time of their writing.[62] Meanwhile, Klumpp and Hollihan heeded their calls for morally conscious criticism by arguing for a "social actor persona" for critics to engage.

In their 1989 article, Klumpp and Hollihan analyzed the social motivations embedded in the rhetoric of Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz's column commenting on the arrest of Olympic athlete Edwin Moses for engaging in prostitution. In their analysis they found that Dershowitz contrasts Moses as the john (a man who is a prostitute's customer) as an upper-class, "multidimensional" victim of circumstance and the prostitute as a "one-dimensional" working-class "purveyor of consumer goods."[63] Klumpp and Hollihan found that Dershowitz's depiction

of the exchange reinforced the established social order which values certain upper-class members of society over subordinates stating:

> The depiction of an evolving yet stable social order shaped in rhetoric, and reshaped through rhetorical invention, focuses attention on particular characteristics of Alan Dershowitz's column: the values that shape his statement of the reality of Edwin Moses' arrest define a social order that he defends against those who would attack it.[64]

Dershowitz implicitly prioritized the rights of the "middle" to "upper-class" johns over the "working class" prostitutes, thus reinforcing a social hierarchy that privileges people of higher classes over members of a predetermined lower class. Klumpp and Hollihan looked at this article specifically to demonstrate how public discourse can function to maintain problematic social hierarchy through rhetorical invention. Thus, by critiquing real-world events and their related discourse, Klumpp and Hollihan emphasized the interpenetration of morality, actions, motives, social dynamics, and ideology within rhetorical acts. Their analysis demonstrates how discourse shapes and sustains social hierarchy and requires scrutiny to be realized as such.

The discussion thus far has been around what the critical turn was moving away from and what it offered for rhetoric scholars. Across the articles described above, there emerged increasing trends in ideology critique through the works of McGee, Charland, and Lucaites and Condit; and a moral imperative to identify where power is expressed through discourse, as seen in the works of Wander, and Klumpp and Hollihan. Critical turn scholars drew attention to how pervasive hegemonic discourses function rhetorically to shape society and dictate its direction, which as Wander suggested was not a good one. In this way, interpreting discourse suspiciously served a vital purpose and demonstrated the need to analyze broader textual domains and deeper persuasive tactics that could not be captured by traditional criticism. Moreover, this diverse range of scholarship, with its new sensibilities for critique, represents what is broadly construed as critical rhetoric. However, the implication is recursive such that more ideological critique

leads to even more ideological critique – suspicion can tend to feed on itself – precariously positioned to endlessly locate unseen power shaping social hierarchies and systems of governance. The critique of domination is effective in pointing out what should be turned away from but is limited in its capacity to open up and construct alternative pathways through discourse. With McKerrow, there are possibilities to enable agency through the critique of freedom; however, the legacy of critical rhetoric will indicate the implications of this strategy have not yet been fully realized. The following section discusses what McKerrow offers through his 1989 rendition of critical rhetoric and links it to the previous discussion on the critical turn and limits of suspicious reading. The section ends by transitioning into how critical rhetoric, broadly construed, has continued to develop in the field.

The Culmination of Critical Rhetoric

Raymie McKerrow's 1989 essay "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis" offers a robust theoretical basis and conceptual grammar for discussing this new trajectory in the field which extends far beyond the primary texts previously discussed. This is the essay where McKerrow coined the term "critical rhetoric," which flips the ideas and wording of "rhetorical criticism," in an effort to shift the notion of criticism from an isolated act to an immersive rhetorical performance. This is not to say that traditional rhetorical criticism does not continue after this transition. Rather this concept helps specify the mode of interpretation this thesis builds as a culmination of the critical scholarship analyzed above. McKerrow's essay integrated many of the previously mentioned texts from McGee, Wander, and Charland, thereby unifying prior contributions while adding an orientational lens through the "principles of praxis." Additionally, linking critical rhetoric to Felski's arguments on the hermeneutics of suspicion will show how they contain parallel sensibilities for critique.

In "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," McKerrow provided the theoretical foundations, followed by eight introductory principles of praxis for what he anointed "*critical rhetoric*."[65] The emphasis on his phrasing signals how he is engaging with the expansion from the traditional rhetorical criticism of individual texts toward a more embedded model of critique. This shift reconfigures how rhetorical critics could orient *themselves* in and around the object(s) of critique. McKerrow summarizes the concept and purpose of critical rhetoric as follows:

> As theory, a critical rhetoric examines the dimensions of domination and freedom as these are exercised in a relativized world. Thus, the first part of this essay focuses on what I am terming a 'critique of domination' and a 'critique of freedom.' The critique of domination has an emancipatory purpose – a telos toward which it aims in the process of demystifying the conditions of domination. The critique of freedom, premised on Michel Foucault's treatment of power relations, has as its telos the prospect of permanent criticism – a self-reflexive critique that turns back on itself even as it promotes a realignment in the forces of power that construct social relations.[66]

This move to expand the theoretical prospect of critique was in response to "Plato's attack marginalizing rhetoric by placing it at the service of truth."[67] Further, by drawing upon theories of ideology and the critique of power posited by Foucault and The Frankfurt School, McKerrow theorized how critical rhetoric could identify and bring into question the illusive mechanisms of power expressed through discourse.

For critical rhetoric to participate in "demystifying the conditions of domination," McKerrow offers "a critique of domination [focused] on the discourse of power which creates and sustains the social practices which control the dominated. It is, more particularly, a critique of ideologies, perceived as rhetorical creations."[68] Drawing on the critique of dominant ideologies informed by The Frankfurt School and Foucault, the discourses that reinforce dominant ideologies become concerning when they merely "reinforce the interests of the ruling class," thus compelling subdivisions of the social hierarchy to follow suit, until the ideological "restrictions" become "institutionalized."[69] Once discourse is institutionalized, there emerges a

hierarchical order "supportive of the establishment," and dominant discourses are reinforced at both the authoritative levels and the subordinate levels of the social order. This inevitably puts the inhabitants of the social order in a deadlock, meaning "the possibility of change, is muted by the fact that the subject already is interpellated with the dominant ideology."[70] Therefore, the impetus for a critical rhetoric is situated to avoid reifying the taken-for-granted relative truths of an organizational hierarchy articulated through discursive practices. Hence, critical rhetoric is complemented by a suspicious orientation toward discourse, seeking to reveal its unseen motivations. However, McKerrow's argument does more than advocate for critical rhetoric to identify conditions of domination. He further articulates the apparatus of critical rhetoric through a Foucauldian "critique of freedom."

Power is pervasive, and as such, McKerrow incorporated a robust understanding of the nuances of power relations within the social realm for his critical orientation. While the dominant "power of the state" takes on one expression of power, the "localized" expression of power remains in social relations. Localized power, and how critical rhetoric engages it, proceeds as follows: "The critic must attend to the 'microphysics of power' in order to understand what *sustains* social practices. Power, thus conceived, is not repressive, but productive – it is an active potentially positive force which creates social relations and sustains them through the appropriation of discourse that 'models' the relations through its expression."[71] Thus, the argument is made that power as expressed through discourse at all societal levels, from governing bodies to individual actors, both creates and sustains social practices. Once the discourse is sustainable, it becomes normalized in social relations, which connotes an attitude of vigilance for critical rhetoric to be wary of expressions of power flowing through discourse at any moment.

Take for example the allegory of working at MGM when I experienced the transition of having the freedom to use the bathroom at will to being restricted to a 15 minute daily maximum. It was relatively easy for me to notice how our freedoms were being limited; however, an employee hired after the transition might have less reason for vigilance and thus may not realize how the established 15 minute norm is an expression of domination that limits employee freedoms. Therefore, vigilance is justified such that any discursive formation at any moment could be an expression of domination. This sensibility is further realized when McKerrow pushes for the Foucauldian "permanent criticism" folded in with the "critique of freedom" in an attempt to avoid critique that arrives at notions of truth and falsity as an end "product rather than as process."[72] This notion of truth as a temporal determination in an amorphous process is a significant break from the Platonic "quest" for universal truth and is a crucial moment of expansion in the theory of critical rhetoric.

In addition to McKerrow's twin critiques of domination and freedom, he elaborates on ways of practicing critical rhetoric through eight "principles of praxis." He differentiates "principles" from a prescribed methodology, opting instead to "outline the 'orientation' (invoked in Burke's sense) that a critic takes toward the object of study."[73] In this regard the critic "performs" rhetoric through their critique, thus embedding (orienting) themselves in and around the analysis of discourse. By offering an orientation through the principles, McKerrow enlivens the *relationship* between critic and discourse which suggests implications for the disposition, attitude, and mood one brings into critique. The relationship between critic and text/object/discourse is an important component for critical rhetoric that built upon through Felski in the postcritical orientation, later. The following discussion summarizes some key

components that provide clear notions of how the critic's relationship with discourse is altered in McKerrow's orientation.

One of the ways critical rhetoric is divorced from traditionalist "universal standards of judgment" is by advancing the claim that, "Rhetoric constitutes *doxastic* rather than *epistemic* knowledge."[74] Doxastic knowledge, normally translated from *doxa* as "popular opinion," points to the kind of malleable truth that might be maintained in one cultural or social context but not hold the same truth in another. In this regard, doxastic knowledge is derived from a critic's subjective immersion within discourse, which is differentiated from the objective critic who performs textual criticism according to a standard of judgement. Moreover, doxastic truth is established according to an ideological position and is reified and made "true" through discourse. In this respect, McKerrow references Robert Hariman, who posited an interpretation of doxa as an opinion that functions according to status and marginality.[75] Hariman argued for an interpretation of doxa that interrelates it with "regard, ranking, and concealment."[76] Expanding on the notion of "concealment," Hariman states:

> The ambiguities inherent in regard and ranking can be managed through addition of a third concept: concealment. No one is known in one's entirety; *doxa* consists in the means by which one is known at all. Obviously, if one were known in one's exact identity – that is, only as a complex of particulars – then no ranking would be possible. Ranking occurs through a process of selecting and deflecting, revealing and concealing, our attention on the nature of a thing. Our opinion of another requires concealing as well as revealing some of what we know, and we are known through our own acts of concealment as well as disclosure.[77]

Doxastic claims are constructed through social interactions and heavily influenced by the extent to which a subject is known to the public. What the public knows then becomes entangled in a dialectic of revelation and concealment. In the development of doxastic claims around a subject, there is a limit to what is revealed or emphasized while other aspects remain concealed. The notion of status is inherent in this process of concealment, such that revelations are prioritized

over marginalized unknowns or that which is unacknowledged. The nature of the doxastic claims that pervade around a discourse or subject; regard, status, and concealment are all things that McKerrow's critic is purposed to identify for instigating change. However, identifying discourses for critique is not necessarily a straightforward process of analyzing one single text; instead, the critic is empowered to *invent* the discourse at which critique is aimed.

Critical rhetoric empowers the critic to assemble the discourse being critiqued from fragments of mediated messages that address the public.[78] In this regard, the critic becomes the inventor of the discourse or self-authorized namer-of-the-problem which is under investigation; thus taking on a participatory role in the act of criticism as a performance. The critic's job is to develop and argue for the "mask of meaning" and possible effects established by the discourse under question.[79] These arguments around meaning-making and doxastic claims level the importance of critical work against the accepted form of knowledge extracted from universalist reasoning. The critic discerns how discourse reveals and conceals meaning as part of the text construction process.

The nature of invention as piecing-together coincides with the text creation process to which McGee was referring with regard to the fragmentation of discourse. McKerrow adopts this text creation as part of the larger process of critical rhetoric, which can be thought of according to "three interrelated themes: rhetoric as embodied performance, subject-as-critic, and subject as social actor and object of a critical rhetoric."[80] By emphasizing rhetoric as a performance, McKerrow empowers the critic to participate in the prospect of social change through critical rhetoric which implies some level of agency. Also, collapsing together the subject and the critic acknowledges how the critic does not live outside the social sphere being criticized. Instead, the critic is equally impacted and created by the social practices they seek to critique. Embedding the

critic in social practices helps essentialize the critic's role as a participant in the project of social change because "[t]he subject, as the locus of a truth, is not simultaneously a knower of the truth of which it is the existent."[81] Thus, the critic becomes the voice that locates expressions of dominance where they may otherwise go undetected. This argument also reinforces the importance of the state of permanent self-criticism to avoid letting established or newly created discourses hold too much power, become normalized, and hinder social growth. In this sense, much of how critical rhetoric was posited relates to Felski's suspicious reading that is wary and distrustful of discourse's face value and poised for self-preservation in the struggle against discourse which is inhibitory of human potential.

The possibility for change is achieved through the permanent critical stance that is introduced by Foucault, who partly sought to call out the dogmatic universalist thinking that justifies social norms and behaviors.[82] Discourse fits in as the constructive component that weaves together and maintains the fabric of power that arbitrates social relations. Therefore, discourse is where critics can call out the undesirable effects of social hierarchy that have been taken for granted. As McKerrow articulates, "discourse is the tactical dimension of the operation of power in its manifold relations at all levels of society, within and between institutions, groups and individuals. The task of a critical rhetoric is to undermine and expose the discourse of power in order to thwart its effects in a social relation…."[83] While power is a positive, society-building force that develops and maintains an ideology through discourse, "…critique begins with a negative moment."[84] The critique identifies where change is needed at the social level via recursive interrogation of the established "regime of truth."[85] Moreover, the sensibility for permanent criticism to be *permanent* complements a suspicious orientation to continuously

reveal the hidden ideological mechanisms of discourse that, self-reflexively, might turn back even on itself.

The state of permanent self-criticism and the principles of praxis McKerrow offers are intended to help critics avoid reifying the forms of knowledge that perpetuate dominant regimes of truth. This argument is more reason for McKerrow not to prescribe a method but an orientation with *ideologiekritk*.[86] Emphasizing critical rhetoric as an orientation instead of a "mere" method gives creative license to the critic to exercise and embody critique as a rhetorical performance. These components of doxastic knowledge, text construction, and permanent criticism are important for informing and enhancing the relationship between critic and discourse. The emancipatory goal of social change starts with identifying through demystification where change is needed, and McKerrow proposes the critique of freedom as a way for critics to realign power dynamics to be more favorable. The idea of permanent criticism serves as the critical "fuel source" to continuously be cognizant of when reform is needed. However, the project of critical rhetoric is tethered to the same recursive tendencies of ideological critique by its propensity to demystify according to the critique of domination, which will be further realized in the legacy of critical rhetoric.

In summary, critical rhetoric broadly construed emboldens critics in understanding how they can orient themselves in and around discursive formations rather than exemplary texts and speeches. As such, McKerrow's essay was in many ways a definitive culmination of the critical turn from McGee, Wander, Charland, and the many scholars who were pushing for a broader sensibility for criticism thus enabling critical rhetoric to emerge as a standalone practice. Trends from Klumpp and Hollihan and Lucaites and Condit helped illustrate how ideological critique, albeit recursive, enhances ways of understanding both hierarchical discourse and reformative

discourse. Collectively, this body of literature offered stronger faculties to understand, interpret, and demystify both macro and micro expressions of power that influence social relations. In review of the literature discussed here, several trends have been noted that relate to Felski's suspicious reading. For example, ideology critique is a common trend that is complemented by a suspicious orientation, presuming discursive language contains veiled meanings and implications. Discourses do not readily display ideologies that motivate them, rather they are perpetually hidden from view and must be dug up and revealed via interpretation. Therefore, when critiquing a text's ideological motivations critics are primed to bring a skeptical disposition, wary attitude, and a mood doubtful of a text's face-value. While effective for critiquing domination and "seeking to overturn the dominant forces allied against us," it remains limited in creatively imagine paths toward emancipation from that very domination. This limitation is parallel to the ones Felski argued were the case for suspicious reading and pivots away from through postcritical reading.

While this discussion illuminates critical rhetoric's limits inherent to its origins, the practice speaks to a necessary faculty for understanding why social change needs to happen, thus has maintained its relevance. Scholars have reconfigured the project to achieve differing ends over the decades, further building and enhancing different features. Given that McKerrow did not prescribe a strict methodology for critical rhetoric, it appears to have been remarkably adaptable to varying circumstances and projects, which some, including myself, would say is one of its strong suits. The following section discusses several of these adaptations to show that there has been an ongoing conversation around the purposes and implications of critical rhetoric, but there are still questions left unanswered. In differing ways, the legacy reinforces how critique tends to be recursive, sustaining perpetual analysis and questioning of power, domination, and

the discursive ways they limit freedom. Therefore, the emphasis on critiquing domination and by extension the hermeneutics of suspicion in the legacy of critical rhetoric will show that there is yet a need for a model that readily engages what comes *after* critique itself. One prototype for a possible model for critical rhetoric will be illustrated through Felski's postcritical reading to be discussed in the subsequent section.

Critical Rhetoric After the Critical Turn

Part of the reason for choosing McKerrow's, McGee's, and Wander's works as primary texts of the critical turn is because of the influence they have had on the field since their publication. Between three of their foundational essays discussed previously, they have amassed over 3,400 cross-references on Google Scholar through 2022.[87] Rhetoric scholars who were influenced by the works of these scholars from the late 1990s through the 2010s and now the 2020s have continued to grow the conversation around critical rhetoric in several important ways. While not all-inclusive, some significant contributions come in the form of the visual ideograph, materialist ideology criticism, the critique of out-law and vernacular discourse, and participatory critical rhetoric. Additionally, each of these contributions expand how critical rhetoric is conceived as a model for critique; however, they are still tethered to the critique of domination, which yet leaves alternative possibilities unexplored.

Several years after the ideograph was developed, Janis Edwards and Carol Winkler expanded McGee's argument to visual media through the visual ideograph. As a vehicle for their argument, Edwards and Winkler interpreted the rhetorical implications of parodied depictions of Joe Rosenthal's photograph of marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima.[88] They argue the visual ideograph maintains the central features of the textual (verbal) ideograph while adding rhetorical possibilities for critics to interpret:

> The ability of cartoonists to alter visual images arguably distinguishes the verbal from the visual ideograph. Unlike the verbal version, visual ideographs can appear to members of the culture in a variety of forms through the addition, omission, and distortion of their component elements…. By comparing the cartoonist's rendition of the image to the memory of the original form, the audience can participate in the reinforcement of the ideograph's categorical meaning, and the creation of the expansions and contractions that result from the parodied contexts.[89]

By challenging McGee's original assertion for verbal ideographs in language, Edwards and Winkler took the conversation to the visual realm of political discourse. Just as an ideograph serves as a locus of ideological meaning in a cultural context, visual representations of resonant images can similarly trigger ideological meaning for audiences. This argument was continued by Dana Cloud and Catherine Palczewski respectively.

In her essay discussing the use of images of Afghan women in discourse on the U.S. war on terror, Cloud asserts visual ideographs function to concretize verbal ideographic slogans such as <clash of civilizations> in her studied context.[90] Depictions of Afghan women in popular news media reinforced a narrative that the U.S. intervention in the middle east was justified on humanitarian grounds. As Cloud summarizes:

> Metonymic, emotionally charged, and widely circulated images of terrorists and abject women established binary oppositions between self and Other, located U.S. viewers in positions of paternalistic gazing, and offered images of a shining modernity that justified U.S. intervention there. Veiling not only the reasons for terrorism, this discourse also rendered opaque the actual motives for the war and, thus, disable real public deliberation over its course.

By Cloud's estimation, visual ideographs effectively obscure the available means to discuss the legitimacy of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, thereby reinforcing the verbal ideograph of the <clash of civilizations>. Palczewski echoed the sentiments of Edwards and Winkler and Cloud on visual ideographs, but this time in the context of early 20th century women's suffrage postcards.[91] The postcards she looked at reinforced anti-suffrage arguments by comically depicting "women forsaking their motherly duties and acting masculine by smoking, wearing masculine clothing, and engaging in the debauchery of the polls."[92] As a form of visual argument for anti-suffrage,

Palczewski suggests these postcards "reiterate the disciplinary norms of the verbal ideographs of <woman> and <man>."[93] In this regard, the visual ideograph and the verbal ideograph form a symbiotic relationship that signifies and reinforces ideological sensibilities from which they are drawing. The visual ideograph scholars demonstrate how ideological critique has maintained its relevance decades after McGee's 1980 publication; however, it still consists of the recursive analysis of unseen power dynamics and their implications on messages and is therefore an extension of the suspicious critique of domination. In other words, it tends to limit the interpretive value of critique to recursively analyze discourses, visual or otherwise, that circulate in the ideological network. Hence, the visual ideograph expands ideology critique to the images in media, but it inevitably leads to further critique, not yet providing a comprehensive sense of what comes after critique itself.

Outside of the contributions that have marked expansion for ideological criticism, scholars have recognized the significance of critical rhetoric in a special section published in the *International Journal of Communication* on the role critical rhetoric has played in communication scholarship over the decades. Among the contributors, Brandon Daniels and Kendall Phillips reflected on the influence of critical rhetoric and discussed four "projects as points of rupture" in the history of critical rhetoric's applications since its inception.[94] The first articulation is that which was offered by McKerrow in his original 1989 text which has already been discussed. The second moment Daniels and Phillips reflected on was Dana Cloud's 1994 response to critical rhetoric through her argument for materialist ideology criticism. In their words, they draw attention to Cloud's essay specifically "because we view it as the first and most significant rupture with the framework of critical rhetoric established in McKerrow's 1989 essay."[95] Part of what Cloud does to "rupture" McKerrow's rendition of critical rhetoric is to

challenge McKerrow's second principle of praxis that the discourse of power is material. Reverting to a Marxist materialist frame, Cloud suggests the theory of discourse McKerrow adopts "is more properly called the discursivity of the material rather than the materiality of discourse," adding later that "[we] cannot talk about unmasking repressive, dominating power without some understanding of reality and oppression."[96] She does not suggest that critical rhetoric is incapable of understanding "reality and oppression," rather she wants to draw a distinction between the critique of discourses of power and the critique of material conditions of oppression. In this regard, Cloud argues that it would be more effective to conceptualize a critical rhetoric centered around the critique of ideological discourse that does not theorize discourse *as* material. She is therefore intentionally limiting it to discerning the ideological motivations of discourse which is recursive and complements a suspicious critique of domination.

Daniels and Phillips contend that Cloud's argument serves as the first substantial point of tension for critical rhetoric, while theories of out-law and vernacular discourse from John Sloop and Kent Ono serve as the second substantial alteration. Although Sloop and Ono agreed with the theoretical underpinnings of critical rhetoric, they advocated for a different telos for the critique of discourse. Rather than focusing on hegemonic discourses of power, they want scholars to draw more attention to the discourse of the oppressed, or what they call "vernacular" and "out-law" communities.[97] Daniels and Phillips explain how this shift in focus changes the role of the critic as follows: "The function of the critical rhetorician, then, was to publicize this out-law discourse in an effort to use its circulation as a means of disrupting structures of dominance."[98] Sloop and Ono's critical rhetoric situated social change through critique from a localized perspective, in contrast with McKerrow's version which is typically suited for

critiquing hegemonic discourses of domination. Although their argument puts less emphasis on the critique of domination per se, it still relies on recursive interpretation as its primary focus. Limited to a telos of further vernacular critique, Ono and Sloop do not yet fully offer a comprehensive mode for how critics engage with discourse after critique itself.

The fourth and perhaps most substantial shift in the critical rhetoric dialogue comes from Michael Middleton, Aaron Hess, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook who published *Participatory Critical Rhetoric: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Studying Rhetoric In Situ*.[99] The purpose of participatory critical rhetoric (PCR) is to provide critics with methodologies for participating in critique *in situ* where rhetorical acts are taking place – live, in real-time – in relation to actually existing structures. Looking at the key assumptions of PCR, it first expands the notion of "text" to encompass the fullness of lived experience.[100] Second, "[PCR] is guided by a participatory epistemology, which includes a range of possibilities activated in the interactions with everyday rhetors and in the material locations of rhetoric."[101] Thus, PCR "enhances rhetorical theory and criticism" by engaging with knowledge understood through participatory experience.[102]

Middleton et al. further contend that PCR is inherently multimodal as it "encompasses the visual, aural, affective, aesthetic, tactile, visceral dimensions of meaning making."[103] With these key assumptions, PCR attempts to give voice to embodied rhetoric through the spatial awareness granted when critics physically participate at the site of rhetorical action. Daniels and Phillips also identify for PCR, that "presence did not erase all forms of critical tension, but relocated them into the network of affect between the body of the critic and the other bodies and materials encountered," which raises awareness to "emotional entanglements" and vulnerability between critic and the actions.[104] Thus, the expansion of PCR amounts to the ways in which the body

informed by physical presence can illuminate new understandings for critique. PCR is probably the closest reconfiguration of critical rhetoric to providing a sense of direction for critics that productively enhances their relations with the others of discourse. However, the action for critics is to recursively exercise further critique as the direction for effecting social change. Similar to the visual ideograph scholars, Cloud's materialist critique, and Ono and Sloop's critique of the vernacular, PCR is still limited in offering a trajectory forward after critique itself.

In their concluding remarks reflecting on critical rhetoric over the years, Daniels and Phillips express their "goal in tracing these shifting concerns has been to demonstrate the disjunctures between these iterations of the critical rhetoric project."[105] That is to say while each identified articulation of critical rhetoric "share genealogical similarities," they also reconfigure and reorient the practices and aims of critical rhetoric in unique ways. Cloud sought to found critical rhetoric on different epistemological grounds of materiality; Ono and Sloop argued for a shift in the telos toward the discourses of marginalized communities; Middleton et al. theorized a participatory critical rhetoric that accounts for bodily awareness in physical activism. I would argue that the Edwards and Winkler similarly reimagine and extend McGee's ideograph through the visual ideograph, as a broadly construed variant of critical rhetoric. However, because each of them maintains emphasis on the recursive faculties of critique to inform the conditions caused by dominant forces, they limit questioning what comes *post*-critique to an afterthought. While they all offer important considerations for how critical rhetoric can be executed, their central contributions have avoided the postcritical questions of what is next and what we can become now that we understand that which we have critiqued.

After investigating the phenomenon of critical rhetoric, one of Daniels and Phillips' implications, and by extension my own, "is to recommend deeper attention into the question of

what we understand to be the ends of critical work," and they suggest "it is perhaps time for a wider archaeological/genealogical exploration of what we understand our critical work to be about and how those ends have shifted over time."[106] In an effort to heed their call and offer another "rupture" in the dialogue of critical rhetoric the following section discusses the primary components of Felski's postcritical reading to propose an argument for what comes after critique.

Critiquing Freedom, Postcritically

In her chapter "'Context Stinks,'" Felski outlines the elements of postcritical reading, thereby contributing an alternative mode of criticism to suspicious reading. She relates her project with the work of other scholars pushing for what could be broadly construed as a "eudaimonic turn;" one which "[embraces] such themes as joy, hope, love, optimism, and inspiration," as opposed to skepticism, uncertainty, wariness, and doubt.[107] Felski suggests crafting a theoretical framework that engages with texts outside the limits of the hermeneutics of suspicion should "more fully acknowledge the coimplication and entanglement of text and critic. Rethinking critique, in this sense, also means rethinking our familiar ideas of context."[108] Similar to McKerrow's critical rhetoric and PCR, Felski seeks to enhance the relational sensibility between text and critic. However, she operates outside of ideological theories drawing, instead on actor-network theory, post-historicist criticism, and affective hermeneutics to sketch out postcritical reading as an alternative orientation that reconfigures the text-to-critic relationship.

Felski first outlines how she envisions postcritical reading by suggesting texts can be interpreted outside of the confines of their historical context. She offers the element of post-historicist criticism as a useful framework for conceptualizing how texts can be interpreted beyond their historical contexts: "Their temporality is dynamic, not fixed or frozen; they speak to, but also beyond, their own moment, anticipating future affinities and conjuring up not yet

imaginable connections."[109] This suggest historical texts can be meaningfully interpreted in conjunction with contemporary perspectives, thus amplifying their applicability in thinking through the complexities of modern life. Hence, Felski maintains that Plato's work need not automatically be rejected if it can enhance our understanding of modern problems to some effect. Moreover, what it means for texts to be influential across multiple historical contexts and contemporary framings is further made important in Felski's second assertion for conceptualizing texts as nonhuman actors.

Felski draws on actor-network theory to expand her conceptual framework for how texts and context are interpellated with critics in a chain of influence. Based in Bruno Latour's work on actor-network theory, she defines nonhuman actors on the following basis: "The 'actor' in actor-network theory is not a solitary self-governing subject who summons up actions and orchestrates events. Rather, actors only become actors via their relations with other phenomena, as mediators and translators linked in extended constellations of cause and effect."[110] Under this view, texts maintain some level of agency in the critical conversation, which suggests new implications for how critics interpret and interact with texts within the broader critical project. In this sense, Felski's argument takes the text construction process of a critical rhetoric a step further to suggest the texts we create have agential capacity. This notion when applied to a critical rhetoric context entails new implications for thinking about the act of critique as a producing text-based agents with their own set of responsibilities. The relationship between text and critic is further expanded in Felski's third assertion for postcritical reading to take on an aesthetic dimension.

Felski's postcritical reading seeks to reorient the purpose of criticism to involve one's aesthetic and affective relations as evidence of "our implication and entanglement with the text."

The notion of a critic as being "entangled" with a text is similar to McKerrow's assertion for critical rhetoric as an "embodied" rhetorical practice. However, Felski's asserts a different aesthetic dimension in postcritical reading that she relates through Marielle Macé's notion of "a stylistics of existence," which suggests the texts we read are aesthetically woven into our lives. Felski explains her position as follows:

> Reading, in this sense, is not just a cognitive activity but an embodied mode of attentiveness that involves us in acts of sensing, perceiving, feeling, registering, and engaging…To speak of a stylistics of existence is to acknowledge that our being in the world is formed and patterned along certain lines and that aesthetic experience can modify or redraw such patterns…Reading, Macé insists, is not simply a matter of deciphering content but involves 'taking on' and testing out new perceptual possibilities.[111]

For Felski, the inclusion of a stylistics of existence invokes a sensual aesthetic component that opens up new possibilities for interpretation. One such possibility is for "affective engagement" through reading, which she defines as follows:

> Affective engagement is the very means by which literary works are able to reach, reorient, and even reconfigure their readers…. The import of a text is not exhausted by what it reveals or conceals about the social conditions that surround it. Rather, it is also a matter of what it sets alight in the reader – what kind of emotions it elicits, what changes of perception it prompts, what bonds and attachments it calls into being.[112]

In other words, affective engagement is one of the ways a text changes the world through influencing the perceptions and emotions of the reader, or critic. From this perspective, when a critic engages with a text via interpretation, it is also a form of attaching oneself to the text through critique. To develop the self-awareness of one's attachment with a text, it is crucial for a postcritical reading to conjoin affect with interpretation such that they are intertwined.

Felski's postcritical reading, then, is meant to build upon suspicious critique by offering elements that (1) expands our notion of context and (2) raise awareness to aesthetic dimensions inherent to the subjective relationship between critic and text. The goal is to offer a new kind of critique that operates outside of the framework presented by a hermeneutics of suspicion:

> Forswearing suspicion, we are confronted not only with the text but with our implication and entanglement with the text. Aggressivity gives way to receptivity, detachment mingles with acknowledged attachment, a text's pastness does not trump its evident presentness, and aesthetic pleasures and sociopolitical resonance are intertwined rather than opposed. The aim is no longer to diminish or subtract from the reality of texts we study but to amplify their reality, as energetic coactors and vital partners in an equal encounter.[113]

Through postcritical reading, Felski offers an orientation that aims to create and imagine the possibilities offered through critical interpretations of texts. In this sense, she seeks to offer further means of exercising agency in the critical process and is therefore complementary to the critique of freedom; seeking to ask what we may become, what might we do with texts that hold so much meaning and have potential to inspire change? She pushes for a higher sensibility around how texts can help "articulate a positive vision for humanistic thought" through affective engagement with the aesthetic dimensions of reading.[114] These elements are important component to inform one's relationship with a text and by extension the other who is implicated. While Felski is speaking within the realm of literary criticism, primarily, her assertions can be applied to critical rhetoric, specifically the critique of freedom, which is the exclusive focus of Chapter II.

Conclusion

The critical turn served an essential role in opening up rhetorical criticism to the broader practice of discourse critique. Among the range of scholars who motivated this shift include McGee, Wander, Charland, Klumpp and Hollihan, Lucaites and Condit, and McKerrow. I have argued here that their collective contributions amount to the mode of scholarship called critical rhetoric. This new practice differentiated significantly from the systematic, objective, traditional approach to rhetorical criticism that was limited in its capacity to address the tremendous socio-political challenges faced worldwide in the latter half of the 20th century. Scholars of the critical turn enhanced our abilities to critique ideologies, demystify expressions of power and

domination, and locate where social change is needed within discursive formations. However, critical rhetoric's enhanced faculties to interpret the machinations of power and domination is limited to the recursive functions of critique in the suspicious mode.

Informed by Felski's argument on the limits of suspicious reading, this chapter has argued that similar limitations can be found in critical rhetoric which emphasizes the faculties to critique domination and the ways in which forces oppress us. While that emphasis has resulted in an abundance of important critical work, questions around what comes after critique still linger in the critical rhetoric conversation. McKerrow and Herbig have reflected on critical rhetoric's emphasis on domination and suggest some unanswered ethical questions: "to isolate liberation as the sole focus [of critical rhetoric] may well leave us without clear answers to a most important question: What's next? What do we do now? Who do we become? And, most importantly, are we done?"[115] Understanding how applying postcritical reading to critical rhetoric would add new dimensions first requires understanding how critical rhetoric itself added new dimensions to rhetorical criticism in general. With this broad understanding of critical rhetoric, its legacy, and limitations, it is time to explore the possibilities for a postcritical orientation.

Chapter II: A Postcritical Orientation

The scholars of the critical turn succeeded in offering new dimensions for interpreting rhetorical texts and discourses that gave rise to critical rhetoric. As a result, scholars seized opportunities to engage in the critique of discourse outside of political speeches. Through revealing new dimensions of constitutive rhetoric, ideology criticism, and demystifying discourses of power, critical rhetoric opens new doors for interpretation to show how discourse shapes social behaviors and beliefs at both 'macro' and 'micro' scales. Felski has highlighted how interpretation afforded by critical theories operate in accordance with the hermeneutics of suspicion, which (as with any form of knowledge creation) has its limits. Similar to McKerrow's critique of domination, suspicious reading serves a recursive orientation for critique which is limited by the assumption that there is always more to demystify or unmask within discourse.

Felski offers postcritical reading as an expanded orientation for critics to consider ethical and affective dimensions of critique to help emphasize how texts influence and inspire us as critics. In other words, Felski invites an alternative orientation based on the disposition, mood, and attitude that inform critique. In a similar self-reflective spirit that spurred scholars of the critical turn to add new analytical dimensions to rhetorical criticism, I argue that Felski's postcritical reading provides a fruitful extension to critical rhetoric's critique of freedom. This extension results in what shall be called postcritical orientation that continues to harness the illuminating potential of critical rhetoric while offering wider avenues for conceptualizing social change postcritique. The goal is to build upon the relations between texts and critics to further enhance social relations among critics and the others of discourse.

Building from both McKerrow's and Felski's arguments, a postcritical orientation provides an adaptive framework that emphasizes a sensibility for ethical questions that are

implied through critique. These ethical questions are partially addressed by considering how critics might engage with the others of discourse. From the critic's orientation and how we conceptualize our relationship to discourse, there is an implicit subjectivity that warrants consideration. McKerrow discusses subjectivity in relation to the critique of domination and the critique of freedom as parallel dimensions; or in other words, thinking about "domination as freedom from and freedom as freedom to" in relation to the self.[116] While both components are crucial to this consideration, the postcritical orientation speaks more to the component of one's "freedom to," which comes after critique. In an interview discussing critical rhetoric and the critique of freedom, McKerrow states, "Sometimes the critique of freedom is simply: what can I become? How can I remake myself?"[117] The postcritical orientation offered here seeks to engage with these questions.

To help conceptualize one possible subjectivity for the postcritical orientation, the first section of this chapter discusses the work of Foucault as a figure who was influential to McKerrow's theoretical foundation for critical rhetoric. Foucault's analysis of the stoic orientation of self-care for others in *The Care of the Self* suggests a subjectivity that readily accommodates the questions McKerrow outlined and offers implications for how self-care can be accomplished *for* others. This subjectivity entails new implications for a postcritical orientation according to disposition, attitude, and mood. The critical disposition informed by self-care subjectivity for others is suited for strengthening relations between selves and others through discourses, and thereby fostering a shared sense of community. The attitude, in this case, might look more charitable and generous when entering the discursive engagements with others postcritically, rather than vigilant and skeptical as with recursive critique. The mood, similar to

postcritical reading, is best suited for optimism that postcritical engagement *can* lead to enhanced social relations.

With these components in mind, the postcritical orientation is therefore complemented by a praxis of permanent *conversation*, to be discussed in the second section. This concept replaces the permanent criticism McKerrow posited, but is similar to his argument for perpetual critique, as it entails an *ongoing* conversation that invites engagement with others postcritically. The theoretical and ethical foundations of the permanent conversation is informed by Emmanuel Levinas' work that speaks to the ethics of face-to-face interactions. Levinas was a 20th century philosopher and Jew who not only lived through both world wars but survived a Nazi labor camp in the 1940s.[118] After seeing the evils that human beings were capable of, Levinas had every right to harbor resentment and contempt for evil-doers. On the contrary, his philosophies often refer to using empathy and respecting others' suffering to see them in the fullest possible light, or in their "infinity." In this regard, much of his philosophy implies a disposition of charitable, generous engagement with others and therefore speaks to the purpose of the permanent conversation.

Further, the rhetorical praxis of permanent conversation from an orientation of self-care for others is informed by Michele Kennerly's analysis of *sermo* in the stoic philosophies of Cicero.[119] Kennerly discusses how Cicero in *De Officiis* combines stoic philosophy with practical rhetorical engagement through the concept of *sermo*, or egalitarian conversation. *Sermo* as conversation assumes that the goal of communication is not to assert one "correct" view over others, but to embrace the validity of diverse perspectives. In this regard, permanent conversation informed by Cicero's *sermo*, maintains the disposition of charitable and generous engagement with others. The combination Levinas and Kennerly's aims to inform how a critic can enter a

postcritical engagement through an ethical lens that is concerned for the well-being of others in the midst of an egalitarian conversation.

What it means to adopt the postcritical orientation and permanent conversation will be demonstrated through two examples, one academic and one documentary. The third section discusses Tony Adams' essay on forgiveness as a postcritical praxis to illustrate how these concepts apply to a scholarly setting. Adams critiques homophobic discourses, then engages in a postcritical conversation with the authors of said discourse in an attempt to exercise forgiveness. His example shows how affective engagement can enhance the relation between critics and the others of discourse. Then, the fourth section discusses how Deeyah Kahn's *White Right: Meeting the Enemy* demonstrates the postcritical orientation and permanent conversation in that she is critical of extremist white supremacists but chooses to engage them in face-to-face conversations. In so doing, she does not assert her views through argumentation and debate; rather, she is thoughtful and listens to her interlocutors to better understand their motivations for harboring hate for people of color, such as herself. In the process of treating extremists as human beings and respecting them she manages to open some of their minds, showing how social change is possible through egalitarian conversation. Both of these examples reveal how the postcritical orientation and permanent conversation invite a critical mood of hope and optimism that others can be reached and tended to post-critique. In this regard, a postcritical orientation is complementary to the sensibilities Felski argued for through postcritical reading oriented towards co-productive world-building.

An Orientation of Self-Care for Others

Felski's argument for post-historicist reading suggests that there remains a place and purpose for historically situated texts in the conduct of contemporary critique. Her position does

not embrace historical texts merely for their canonical wisdom; rather, she draws attention to our "acknowledged attachment" to certain texts as informants for how we interface with the world today. It is the case that much of our current conversation within rhetorical studies is tethered to the theories and postulations of ancient figures from Plato, Aristotle, Gorgias, Isocrates, Cicero, and others. Even though modern theoretical discourse has evolved to include feminist theory, queer theory, and post-colonial theory, among many others, Felski argues that there may still be a place to draw from the words of historical texts that resonate with modern readers. This sentiment will be seen with the work of rhetorician Michele Kennerly who, similar to Foucault, finds utility in analyzing ancient Stoic texts to enhance present day understanding of rhetoric and philosophy. To expand on what this means for a postcritical orientation, I turn to the work of Foucault on the subjectivity of self-care.

In *The Care of the Self*, Foucault explores the philosophies of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, among others, to stitch together ideas around "the cultivation of the self" in relation to pleasure and sexuality.[120] He specifically chose texts that draw attention to the self, meaning they were made up of ethical practices and arguments for how a person should conduct oneself to live a fulfilled and virtuous life. "The care of the self, for Epictetus," Foucault writes, "is a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence."[121] Epictetus' teachings are oriented around the self as the locus of what McKerrow would consider our "freedom to" become something better through self-care. In this sense, we might think of these figures as ancient experts on self-care, such that "learning how to live" was their lifelong pursuit and became a "permanent exercise."[122] Further in his analysis, Foucault found that the Stoics were not just interested in self-care for individual benefit

but as an exercise for the benefit of others as well. Self-care *as* care for others: this is a key component of the postcritical orientation I am proposing.

Foucault writes on practical, introspective exercises for which the Stoics advocated that help illustrate the devotion they cultivated for self-care and the interests of others:

> Around the care of the self, there developed an entire activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others were linked together. Here we touch on one of the most important aspects of this activity devoted to oneself: it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice.[123]

The Stoics were not interested in maintaining their philosophies in seclusion; instead, they sought to share their insights through schools and institutional practices open to all.[124] Further, on how the stoic practices played out in a social system, Foucault writes,

> [The] interplay of the care of the self and the help of the other blends into preexisting relations, giving them a new coloration and a greater warmth. The care of the self – or the attention one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves – appears then as an intensification of social relations.[125]

As a social practice, the stoic care of the self was meant to enhance and embolden the relations between oneself and others. In this sense, the stoic way of life maintains an ethics of building healthy, sustainable communities such that each person is concerned with the development and well-being of the next. That project logically begins with the self as the preliminary locus of social enhancement. How then could Foucault's interpretation of Stoic subjectivity orientated around self-care be translated to a postcritical orientation? The answer requires a reconfigured notion of subjectivity for a reoriented critical rhetoric.

Subjectivity in critical rhetoric is partially defined by an individual's embeddedness within systems of power, domination, and social hierarchy, which are all informed by ideologies mediated discursively. Subjects influence and are influenced by symbols expressed through systems of discourse; however, McKerrow reminds us "the subject is more than the symbols used to refer to its characteristics…the subject's own telos also participates in the act of self-

constitution."[126] A critical subject's self-constituted telos is therefore a form of agency, which is further advanced through the process of text-invention from fragments. Speaking to this process, McKerrow states:

> [The] goal is to pull together those fragments whose intersection in real lives has meaning for social actors – meaning that confines them as either subjects empowered to become citizens or social actors with a potential to enact new relations of power. As such, the invented text functions to enable historicized subjects alter the conditions of their lived experience.[127]

In this regard the critical rhetorician clarifies the meaning of texts to show how they impact the lives of social actors as a part of the larger social discourse. At this moment, the critic is entering "into a dialectical relation with the ideology" within a social system.[128] A dialectical relation entails, among other things, a conversational interaction between two presumed parties where each party influences the other. When entering a dialectic, subjects are accountable for the desires, purposes, and goals bound up in the interaction, whether or not they are aware of them. McKerrow acknowledges this when he states, "the critic assumes a face that is projected toward the world in the act of critique."[129] Therefore, ethical considerations precede any dialectical interaction, which the critic-as-subject must determine in the context of critique. This moment is where the stoic self-care for others Foucault theorized could be enacted as one possible lens for a postcritical orientation.

While the situations that Foucault discusses in *The Care of the Self* relate to physical relations between individuals, the stoic sensibilities could be adapted in a way that tends to the level of interaction that takes place in the realm of critical rhetoric. Inspired by Felski's argument for texts-as-agents, the act of critique should be thought of as an extension of oneself, while the objects of critique should be thought of as extensions of others. At this level of interaction, critical rhetoric tends to the microphysics of power at stake within the discourse identified in this interaction to emancipate subjects from oppressive abuses of power; the act of critique.

Therefore, the act of critique forms a dialectical relationship between the critic and the originator of discourse that is being critiqued. Implied through critique is the postcritical question of how to relate with the others of discourse once we have tended to the abuses of power? The postcritical orientation seeks to engage with this question and venture to suggest ways of relating with the "others of discourse" postcritique. Stoic self-care for others could function in a postcritical orientation to open up the freedom to build mutual connection between critic and other. What that postcritical relationality looks like in concrete terms can be shown, at least in part, by the idea of a permanent conversation.

The Permanent Conversation

In the context of the postcritical orientation, the permanent conversation represents the idea of an ongoing mutual interaction between the critic-as-subject and the others of discourse who are implicated in critique. Informed by the stoic self-care for the care of others, the permanent conversation offers one possibility for thinking about how we can engage with others to enhance social relations. Also, the permanent conversation reorients McKerrow's permanent criticism from the self-reflexive ongoing critique of discourse to the self-reflexive ongoing conversation with others of discourse. Conceptualizing this for a postcritical orientation denotes certain stipulations to enable a conversation to occur as well as the rhetorical praxis for enacting said conversation. Emmanuel Levinas' work provides a useful theoretical framework helpful for thinking about the ethical basis necessary for communicative interaction. Then, keeping with the Stoic framework to theorize these contributions, Michele Kennerly's interpretation of stoic *sermo*, or conversation, provides a helpful lens for thinking about conversation as rhetorical praxis. In this sense, the permanent conversation is informed by an ethical theory of otherness and a rhetorical praxis of mutual, egalitarian engagement. Additionally, Levinas and Kennerly

help demonstrate how a critic can imbue their text, or critique, as-agent with an authentic attempt toward ethical engagement.

Addressing the Other

In his "Introduction" to Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, John Wild discusses how communicative exchange between oneself, and others is required if one is to treat another person as a complete being:

> How can I coexist with [an other] and still leave his otherness intact? According to Levinas, there is only one way, by language…. But, if communication and community is to be achieved, a real response, a responsible answer must be given. This means that I must be ready to put my world into words, and to offer it to the other…. Responsible communication depends on an initial act of generosity, a giving of my world to him with all its dubious assumptions and arbitrary features.[130]

This question and the subsequent discussion Wild posits serve as the central phenomenological interaction that Levinas is working from in *Totality and Infinity*. As Wild suggests, Levinas' argument is that giving oneself in "an initial act of generosity" is necessary to achieve meaningful communication and hence build a sense of community between subjects. The interaction is meaningful in the sense that each subject is fully recognized, heard, and appreciated.

However, generously giving oneself over to the other through this interaction could be seen as negating oneself for the sake of someone else. If I have to give myself over completely to embody "responsible communication" and achieve a sense of community, then I run the risk of losing my own sense of self or identity. This approach to communication, Levinas suggests, presupposes an opposition between separate subjects and is the basis for conflict and resistance. Alternatively, he suggests generous giving is what allows the other to "reveal himself" so that coexistence can occur in "gentleness":

> The Other precisely *reveals* himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness…. This peaceable welcome is

> produced primordially in the gentleness of the [face], in which the separated being can recollect itself, because of which it *inhabits*, and in its dwelling accomplishes separation. Inhabitation and the intimacy of the dwelling which make the separation of the human being possible thus imply a first revelation of the Other.[131]

In this context, Levinas suggests the generous interaction in "gentleness" with the exterior other as an expression of the utmost respect allows the space for oneself to exist. As a "primordial phenomenon," the "gentleness" of an ethical encounter of the other serves to garner reciprocal relationality among irreducible subjects. No individual's values or positionality is regarded as more valuable or important than another. This sensibility complements what Levinas calls a "responsibility for the other."

Levinas discusses the responsibility for the other in relation to time, history, and the "saying" which signifies our representations of personal history and otherwise:

> [If] time is to show an ambiguity of being and the otherwise than being, its temporalization is to be conceived not as essence, but as saying… the saying, in its power of equivocation, that is, in the enigma whose secret it keeps, escapes the epos of essence…. This equivocation or enigma is an inalienable power in saying and a modality of transcendence. Subjectivity is a node and a denouement – of essence and essence's other.[132]

Here, Levinas discusses the difficulty of translating historical experiences determined by memory into spoken language. Descriptions are equivocations of past subjective experience, as the full scope of past experience remains an "enigma whose secret it keeps." Levinas contends that the attempt to communicate past experience is "an inalienable power," such that every individual has a right to their own history that only they can access through personal memory. In this temporal view, one's subjectivity is the "denouement" of their personal history. The reality of this situation Levinas outlines is posited as an even playing field that we must all contend with in our temporal bodies.

The process thus described establishes for Levinas the preconceived limitations of existence that inform the possibilities that shape one's subjectivity. His next step is to suggest the intrinsic responsibility that frames the encounter of two subjects:

> [The] relationship with a past that is on the hither side of every present…is included in the extraordinary and everyday event of my responsibility for the faults or the misfortune of others, in my responsibility that answers for the freedom of another…. The freedom of another could never begin in my freedom, that is, abide in the same present, be contemporary, be representable to me…. The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a 'prior to every memory,' …. The responsibility for the other is the locus in which is situated the null-site of subjectivity…. The time of the *said* and of *essence* there lets the pre-original saying be heard, answers to transcendence,… to the irreducible divergency that opens here between the non-present and every representable divergency….[133]

Each individual's history is bound up in everyday encounters between individuals, in the sense that whether they are discussed in the language of conversation, they still inform each subjectivity. The freedom that accompanies one's subjectivity is unique to each individual and is not "representable" to anyone else. In some sense, this means I could never fully know or comprehend another person's suffering, nor could I assert myself to know how they should cope with it. Hence, the responsibility for the other is to respect that the other *does* suffer, but in the context of an idiosyncratic subjectivity, just as I do. Levinas argues that the responsibility for the other occurs prior to the encounter between subjects, serving as the bedrock for the possibility of mutual communication and community.

Communication – discourse – is required for the mutual existence of community to occur, which also requires an ethical sensibility where the other is inviolable:

> In discourse the divergence that inevitably opens between the Other as my theme and the Other as my interlocuter, emancipated from the theme that seemed a moment to hold him, forthwith contests the meaning I ascribe to my interlocutor. The formal structure of language thereby announces the ethical inviolability of the Other…. For the ethical relationship which subtends discourse is not a species of consciousness whose ray emanates from the I; it puts the I into question. This putting in question emanates from the other.[134]

Here Levinas provides additional reason to suggest that an individual fundamentally cannot, in any ultimate sense, be subsumed, ruled, or reduced by another individual. The Other perpetually escapes and resists my definition, no matter how hard I try to define them. But this is a challenging proposition, as the unknowable Other "puts the I into question" in the discursive interaction. However, Levinas suggests this position of questioning need not be a bad thing, rather, it is the essence of the conversation which seeks to contain that which cannot be contained:

> The idea of infinity, the overflowing of finite thought by its content, effectuates the relation of thought with what exceeds its capacity…. This is the situation we call welcome of the face. The idea of infinity is produced in the *opposition* of conversation, in sociality. The relation with the face, with the other absolutely other which I can not contain, the other in this sense infinite, is nonetheless my Idea…. [But the] 'resistance' of the other does not do violence to me, does not act negatively; it has a positive structure; ethical.[135]

Levinas suggests it is a misconception to reduce a human being within to a confined identification. While identities enable some sense of relationality among individuals, he suggests the confines of a "conversation, in sociality" cannot capture the full scope of the human beings participating in the encounter. Again, he urges against an anxious reading of this, which suggests "I" can never truly be understood; rather, he suggests this is fundamental for positing an ethical relationship. Diane Davis provides a helpful portrayal of this notion in an analogous Star Trek episode. In the episode, Captain Kirk develops a friendship with an alien whose species communicates via an incomprehensible dialect: "There is peace without understanding, or better: there is peace despite profound nonunderstanding. Which suggests that understanding is not a prerequisite for peace, that a radically hospitable opening to alterity precedes cogitation and volition."[136] A conversation between two opposed individuals need not end in sheer misunderstanding. Instead, it can found mutual coexistence maintained out of loving grace and

respect. Although understanding one another is desirable, it is ultimately impossible, as Levinas suggests; however, it is not necessary for mutual coexistence.

Levinas' theory of ethics is an abstraction of the common everyday occurrence of meeting another and is meant to establish a universalizable ethics of relationality. In this sense, it speaks to an ethical sensibility of sociality that is required to build a community that is always – in permanence – available. His formulation does not negate the realities of war, conflict, and violence, when he suggests:

> Murder alone lays claim to total negation…. To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely. Murder exercises a power over what escapes power…. The alterity that is expressed in the face provides the unique 'matter' possible for total negation. I can wish to kill only an existent absolutely independent, which exceeds my powers infinitely, and therefore does not oppose them but paralyzes the very power of power.[137]

Murder is therefore the epitome of negating the other and rendering them incomprehensible to the murderer. Interestingly, Levinas suggests murder "paralyzes the very power of power" such that it marks the limit of one's power over another. In this sense, seeking to harm another person occurs at the limit Levinas pointed out earlier to fully understand or define the other in their complexity and infinity. But just as the ethical responsibility for the other is the seed for communal coexistence, the confirmed negation of the other which leads to murder is the seed for societal destruction. Understood as a spectrum of possibility, Levinas seeks to outline an ideal encounter necessary to truly "see" another person in their fullest extent – in their "infinity" – to build a more peaceful society. Since this possibility is perpetually available to us in each encounter with the other, it bears a permanent quality and serves as a base justification for the permanent conversation. If critique is approached with the assumption that constructive conversations can be had, it prepares critics to orient themselves through an optimistic mood and attitude for discursive engagement.

In the context of critical rhetoric and the postcritical orientation, the implication of Levinas' argument is to suggest there is always the possibility to engage with the others of discourse in a critical conversation. The purpose of that conversation would be to at least attempt, optimistically, to see the other in their infinity in an attempt to reach a feasible social arrangement where mutual coexistence can occur through open dialectics formed through critique. I do not propose that the permanent conversation should *always* lead to a pure and simple understanding of one another; it is not utopian or naïve of the harsh realities that are faced by structures of domination (and the critique thereof). Rather, the Levinasean permanence of the permanent conversation is an invitation available in the postcritical orientation that emerges from critique. Just as McKerrow argues that there is always a place for self-reflexive critique, I am proposing there is always dispositional space for engaging with the others of discourse. In this sense, the postcritical orientation and permanent conversation leans into the critique of freedom, but also reconfigures it by offering one possibility of how it could play out postcritique.

Conversing with Others

Levinas' work provides a meaningful theoretical foundation for the permanent conversation, but his work does not readily provide practical applications for seeing the other in everyday situations. Returning to stoic philosophy understood rhetorically, conversational praxis as a means to build healthy relationships is explored by Michele Kennerly in her essay "*Sermo* and Stoic Sociality in Cicero's *De Officiis*." Drawing from Cicero's stoicism helps build from the stoic orientation on self-care for the care of others that is the starting point for the postcritical orientation. In her analysis of *De Officiis*, Kennerly argues that Cicero's emphasis on *sermo*, or conversation, is an attempt to reconcile stoic philosophies oriented on human togetherness with a rhetorical praxis:

> *De Officiis* demonstrates Cicero's own very Roman rhetorical prowess. Just as he widens the applicability of Stoic ethical theory by removing the sage from center-stage, so does he expand the scope of Stoic philosophical and rhetorical theory by emphasizing the persuasive power of a conversational style of public address, a style well supported by Stoicism's foundations in communal sociality.[138]

Kennerly rightly suggests that most stoic texts revolve around lessons and meditations of sage-like individuals such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. "The challenge for Cicero in *De Officiis*," Kennerly writes, "becomes one of how to translate foundational Stoic philosophical tenets (such as the sovereign importance of maintaining human fellowship)…to rhetorical situations."[139] While their philosophies are oriented around individual action, Kennerly argues they do not clearly explain how to apply them in a rhetorical or discursive setting, such as in a conversation. As an influential figure in rhetoric, Cicero provides additional means to apply their philosophies in practical circumstances.

De Officiis carries a suggestive and educational tone as it was addressed to Cicero's son Marcus and was meant to assist him in dealing with the struggle to live virtuously.[140] In so doing, Kennerly identifies several tips Cicero offers for engaging with others productively and cordially as an "urbane conversationalist… do not hog the conversation; do not change the subject before conversation about it has reached a natural conclusion, do not insult people (especially in their absence)… if the subject is serious, treat it gravely, if it is light, treat it wittily; speak distinctly and gently…"[141] Although Cicero's tips are not groundbreaking, they maintain a charitable and appropriate, considered tone as well respect for the other person participating in the conversation. In this sense, Cicero reminds us that the conversation should not be approached for selfish gain, but rather is oriented toward fellowship.

Beyond the conversational tone of Cicero's rhetorical praxis, there is the important and deeper component of sharing concern with compatriots through "social *oikeiôsis*," which Kennerly writes, "pertains to the nature of a creature's interactions with others to whom it is

related (by species, language, government, city, family, etc.)."[142] In practice, social *oikeiôsis* entails empathizing and identifying with the interlocutors of conversations, serving the stoic care for others. Kennerly quotes Malcolm Schofield to demonstrate the importance of social *oikeiôsis* Stoic theory such that "identifying with [others]… does not entail that I subordinate or subsume his or her interests under my own. On the contrary: it involves the disposition to adopt the other's point of view."[143] Similar to Levinas responsibility for the other, the stoic "identification" with others must avoid defining others in a way that reduces their status but should aim towards care for their individual circumstances.

Kennerly advances stoic social *oikeiôsis* to the practical Ciceronian oratorical circumstances to aid in communal connection:

> [An] orator can…shape his oration so that it resonates with that other's concerns and prejudices and even anticipates that other's refutations. An orator who understands human community as a Stoic conceives it…will employ adjoining imagery, embracing tones, and encircling words in his speeches. By doing so, he will make himself seem/seen as connected to the community, as one of the many, *unus de multis*.[144]

The rhetoric of an orator with stoic sensibilities, or stoic rhetoric, thus identifies with the concerns of the community to which they are speaking. Stoic rhetoric is concerned with their community's struggles for the purpose of strengthening social bonds based on mutual understanding of circumstances. Cicero's stoic rhetoric is intended to enhance sociality by adopting a conversational tone understood as *sermo* that distinguishes it from the forceful rhetoric aimed towards glory. Kennerly summarizes *sermo*'s purpose in *De Officiis*, "Cicero tones down oratory-glory when he tempers it with *sermo*…. Instead of being aggressive, oratory should be connective; instead of a competing tone, the orator should try a conversing one." [145] As a nexus point of rhetoric and stoic care for others, Cicero's *sermo* advances a rhetorical praxis

that is adapted to aid others through a mutual sense of cooperation, rather than asserting one's views over others.

Adapting Kennerly's interpretation of *sermo* to the permanent conversation would mean to think of critics as the Ciceronian orators and the others of discourse as the audience. As a rhetorical praxis, the permanent conversation asks critics to take up the available means to engage the others of discourse in conversation. This could mean extending an invitation for conversation by directly addressing someone postcritique who is associated with the discourse under critique, or by offering a hypothetical situation of how a conversation might play out post-critically that relates to the critique. Informed by the permanence of Levinasean ethics of the other, the permanent conversation is something that is always available to critics as well, as critique is something that occurs after the initial discursive moment. The ideas posited thus far refer to theoretical grounding for the postcritical orientation, disposition, attitude, and mood that gesture toward optimistic engagement through permanent conversation. However, the question lingers, what does this orientation look like in practice? To illustrate what the permanent conversation could look like from a postcritical orientation, I turn to an essay on critical rhetoric and forgiveness by Tony Adams.

Permanent Conversation Through Forgiveness

My arguments for leaning into the critique of freedom extended through the postcritical orientation are not the first of their kind. Communication scholar Tony Adams has also considered a similar orientation, and his adaptation exemplifies the permanent conversation I have sketched throughout. In his article "Critical Rhetoric, Relationality, and Temporality: A Case for Forgiveness," Adams puts emphasis on the relational and temporal aspects to critical rhetoric. He suggests that, in addition to critiquing oppressive discourse, critics "have a

responsibility to offer insights about the harmful relational and temporal residues enacted by this discourse, which may require dealing with the agents who espoused injustice and hate…One way to make amends is through the concept of forgiveness."[146] Adams fundamentally views critique as a relational activity where the critic is one accountable agent and the originator(s) of discourses being critiqued are the other accountable agent(s). He argues there are implications of doing critique which involves acknowledging relationality and engaging with the others of discourse postcritique. His analysis on how forgiveness may work for critical rhetoric adopts a postcritical orientation and his essay models what it means to actually engage in the permanent conversation.

Adams argues for critics to engage with relationality and temporality as a consequence of participating in critique. He explains relationality as follows:

> Doing critical rhetoric means focusing on harmful discourse as well as the agents who create and perpetuate the discourse, the persons implicated by this discourse, and how the implicated persons relate to the agents. Discourse is embodied and enacted, and when, as critical rhetoricians, we identify harm, we also identify and implicate harm-doers. Consequently, doing critical rhetoric means making criticism relational.[147]

Adams draws our attention to the connection that is built from critique between the critic and the purveyor of harmful discourse. When a scholar critiques discourse, they are by extension critiquing the person who perpetuated that discourse, which creates a kind of relationship between agents. Additionally, temporality comes into play hermeneutically in that critique presently responds to past discourse to suggest future discursive possibilities.[148] Part of conceptualizing that future involves thinking about what is to be done for the accountable parties responsible for harmful discourse. The fact that the critic is in a position to name and identify the concerning repercussions of harmful discourse suggests they are in an advantageous position to

offer constructive alternatives to the harmful discourse thereby enacting a change in response to the initial critique.

Adams suggests forgiveness as one possible direction for critics to take postcritically as a way of overcoming the resentment that might build up when identifying harm done. Drawing on the work of humanities scholar Jerome Neu and philosopher Garry Hagberg, Adams writes:

> Forgiveness happens with 'a change of heart, a shift in attitude, an alteration of an inner state' (Neu, 2011, p. 134); it occurs when a victim overcomes resentment and contempt toward an entity (ourselves included) for committing an offense (Hagberg, 2011).…With forgiveness, a person does not forget an offense, but rather develops a new relationship to the offense….[149]

By this definition, forgiveness is a transformational process where a change has occurred in the inner state of a subject or victim of an offense. Importantly, forgiveness does not minimize the offense by forgetting it ever happened; rather, it is a means for redefining one's relationship with an offender.

Additionally, the redefinition offered through forgiveness carries the possibility of enhancing relationships as Adams suggests, "being able to forgive others, to overcome resentment and contempt, can improve our relationships; perpetually resenting an offender leaves little hope for collaboration, improved interaction, and social change or justice."[150] Moreover, he writes that exercising forgiveness is a way to "release the burden of a harmful past," and avoid continuously carrying the pain of the offense for "the burden of not forgiving can infuse us with hate, stress, and contempt."[151] In this sense forgiveness functions similarly for Adams as the stoic orientation does for the postcritical orientation that posits self-care for the care of others. Forgiveness aids self-care by releasing the burdens of hatred and contempt for others and simultaneously aims to care for others by strengthening social relations between agents. Forgiveness is an attempt to engage with the agents of discourse postcritique based on the assumption that change can happen for the better. Adams suggests it is one way for critics to

exercise their responsibility to provide "potential remedies" for the harmful discourse identified through critique.

Adams demonstrates what forgiveness might look like for a postcritical orientation in response to his critique of the harmful language of two homophobic, oppressive pieces of discourse from Shamla McLaurin and Timothy Sauppé. Within these examples Adams identifies their blatant display of hateful and divisive language. Respectively, McLaurin and Sauppé describe homosexuality as "wrong" and "unusual" and relate maligning same-sex relations to "civil service."[152] After identifying the harmful nature of their discourse Adams demonstrates forgiveness by way of a hypothetical encounter with McLaurin and Sauppé. Adams explains what he would do as a queer person implicated in their discourse: "I would find and inform [them] about the ways their discourse has harmed me and to inquire about their intentions for creating and perpetuating hateful ideas…. I would like to assume that they did not know they were being offensive with their discourse…."[153] Here Adams imagines a conversation where he would explain why the words of McLaurin and Sauppé were harmful to him but remains charitable and generous by giving them the benefit of the doubt by assuming they did not intend to cause harm. In this sense, Adams is postcritically engaging in the permanent conversation by opening himself to a possible dialogue with McLaurin and Sauppé through his essay.

Adams further proposes a remedy for the situation would be for McLaurin and Sauppé to recant their statements against same-sex relationships and apologize. However, he is not naïve about the likelihood of success of this remedy or for him to fully forgive:

> Although, I recognize that these demands may be unrealistic, I feel as though I cannot yet forgive Sauppé…I will continue to harbor resentment and contempt toward these entities, though I recognize they might not care….I do want to forgive McLaurin and Sauppé but, as I write, I feel my anxiety rise, my heartbeat race, and the tension increase in my upper back; the embodiment of criticism, of exposure to harmful discourse, of engaging tarnished pasts to cultivate hopeful futures.[154]

Recognizing the limitations of his hypothetical conversation with McLaurin and Sauppé, Adams still feels the sting of their comments and is frustrated by the fact such harmful discourse has disseminated. He even expresses what Felski would consider affective engagement with his critique by explicitly writing the emotions and sensations he feels when engaging with harmful discourse. Adams writes authentically and from the heart, admitting to his emotional disposition. Still, he sees the importance of *attempting* to exercise forgiveness as part of the bigger project of critique for social change:

> With identifying harm comes a need to discuss, postcriticism, how to address the harm that has been identified; asking the critic to recognize the myriad ways in which harmful discourse is tangled by time and ties to the critic, the agent of discourse, and others; and offering strategies for repairing past harms and promoting just futures.[155]

As a critic of harmful discourse, Adams sees the onus to strategize remedies is on him. He has aligned himself in a postcritical orientation to the harmful discourses of McLaurin and Sauppé and has engaged in the permanent conversation with the intention to forgive. His attempt to forgive McLaurin and Sauppé, however successful or unsuccessful, demonstrates how the permanent conversation seeks to actualize social change through engaging with the others of discourse as necessary participants for social change to take effect. Adams does not expect or force forgiveness to happen, rather he uses it to orient himself postcritically to the hypothetical conversation he conceptualizes. He sees the necessity to offer it as a possible remedy to the challenges posited through his critique.

Adams' argument for forgiveness as a rhetorical praxis is an example of engaging in the permanent conversation that embodies many of the aspects of the postcritical orientation discussed thus far. His idea of forgiveness expresses the stoic orientation of self-care for the care of others through productive relationship building. He imagines a hypothetical conversation with the others of the discourses he critiques gesturing toward a Levinasean ethics of seeing them in

their "infinity" as more than just the words on a webpage. His example of postcritical forgiveness embodies the Stoic rhetoric of sermo that presumes the interlocutors of the conversation are individuals who are worth reaching and connecting with for building a better community. Adams' postcritical forgiveness is a stark example of the postcritical orientation and permanent conversation rendered in a scholarly format; however, he shows that forgiveness asks a lot of us and can be difficult to fully enact postcritically. This is partially due to Adams' inability to physically interact with his interlocutors, thereby leaving him to forgive according to his own devices and is a limitation of applying forgiveness discursively. Further illustration of what is possible through a postcritical orientation around self-care for others, inspiration and direction can be found in the voice of human rights activist Deeyah Khan.

Deeyah Khan: Facing and Befriending the Enemy

Documentary filmmaker Deeyah Khan has been a human rights activist since her father took her to an anti-racist and anti-fascist rally in her birth country, Norway, at six years old. She was raised in a Muslim household to a family of Middle Eastern descent, and she is now the director and producer of award winning films such as *Banaz: A Love Story* and *Jihad: A Story of the Others*. Her films depict the perspectives and beliefs that motivate violent extremist behavior. In *Banaz*, she conveys the systemic neglect which resulted in the "so-called honor killing" of British-Iraqi woman Banaz Mahmod.[156] In *Jihad*, Khan sits down with extremist Muslims to understand what draws them to radical and violent behavior.[157] Part of what makes her documentaries stand out in such powerful ways are her "empathy-based approaches to conflict resolution" aimed toward reducing racial violence and bigotry.[158] Evidenced in her documentaries, Khan willingly confronts extremists with a calm, gentle demeanor, sometimes in their own homes ('enemy territory'). Rather than interrogating them, she asks them about their

beliefs with the genuine intent to hear what they have to say without scrutiny or suspicion. She seeks to find mutual understanding of their points of view, not to assert her views as dominant. In this way, she exercises affective engagement with her interlocutors; instead, of using them as an artifact for interpretation. The result of her choice to engage them in this way sometimes leads them to change their perspectives for the better.

Each of her films offer profound depictions of what is possible when engaging with extremists through her approach. However, her documentary *White Right: Meeting the Enemy* will be the focal point of this discussion as Khan embodies the postcritical orientation of self-care for others through engaging in a permanent conversation.[159] In the film, Khan orients her work through a lens of self-care by responding to hateful messages she received from Europeans and Americans for participating in a BBC interview that promoted multiculturalism in the UK.[160] These messages took on a threatening, violent, and racist tone targeting her ethnicity, skin color, and sexual orientation; calling her "worthless," "shitskinned," and wishing death upon her. She was shocked by the extremity of the messages, but instead of surrendering to the hateful onslaught, she chose to travel to the U.S. to meet face-to-face with racist extremists. She explains her purpose was not to fight them but to understand them: "I want to try to get behind the hatred and the extremist ideology, to find out what they are really like as human beings."[161] In this regard, Khan orients herself from the assumption that a respectful conversation is possible with those who would otherwise wish ill upon members of her race and ethnicity. She brings a receptive mood into the conversation seeking to build a productive relationship and establish some level of peace in engagement.

Additionally, *White Right* continues Levinas' challenge to address extremist others, in the form of present day white supremacists and neo-Nazis who were inspired by Hitler's Nazi

regime which Levinas experienced. Throughout the film, Khan sits down with racist activists, listens to them, hears their stories, even befriends them at times, to demonstrate that persuasion and change are possible even within the most extreme communities. Hence, she is engaging in a Levinasean-stoic permanent conversation for the concern of the evilest others by approaching them through a disposition of "gentleness." In this sense, Khan is the culmination of the components that make up the postcritical orientation inspired by Felski's optimistic attitude, and receptive mood. Foucault's findings of the stoic self-care for others, Levinas' ethical disposition toward others, and Kennerly's egalitarian *sermo* around building community. We see the abundant points of contact between Khan and the postcritical orientation through key moments in the film.

The first person Khan interviewed in *White Right* was the leader of the far-right, neo-Nazi group called The National Socialist Movement (NSM), Jeff Schoep. In his interview with Khan, he explains that the white race is "under full assault" and is projected to become the minority race in the United States. He considers himself a white civil rights activist and even suggested he and his movement is for White people what MLK's civil rights movement was for Black people in the 1960s. Schoep explains that the NSM considers multiculturalism to be a conspiratorial effort organized by those who have power over media and culture to end the white race. Despite learning about his horrific beliefs, Khan approaches Schoep with care and garners his respect throughout their interactions. She shares with him the hateful messages she received after the BBC interview and asks him if their views resonate with his. He responds saying, "I discourage any illegal activity, which would include making threats to people," and he expresses his distaste when she refers to herself as "shitskinned."[162]

This first interview represents Khan's empathetic interview style where she does not interrogate her interviewees about their hateful, divisive, and racist beliefs. Instead, she chooses to let them speak openly without threat of being verbally attacked. She establishes what Felski would consider a mood of receptivity in her conversations with extremists by listening to their stories rather than being suspicious of their intentions. However, she still respectfully challenges them when she asks them to look at things from her perspective as a woman of color who has received threats of violence herself. As the film unfolds, it becomes clear that Khan employs her empathy-based approach similarly to Kennerly's notion of *sermo*, with the intent to persuade extremists to change their beliefs for the better through dialogue. In other words, she treats even extreme white supremacists as 'infinite' humans worthy of reaching.

Examples of the efficacy of her approach are seen in two of the extremist NSM members she interviews, Brian Culpepper and Ken Parker. In the film, Khan visited Culpepper's home in Tennessee where he and other extremists were preparing for the possibility of physical conflict with counter activists and anti-fascists. After spending significant time with Culpepper she learns that his ideal political system would be a white ethno-state that does not have a place for non-whites, including Khan. She asks him if he would be willing to deport Khan if he were to actualize his ideal system to which he responds saying, "I consider you a friend at this point and I personally would hate to see you go… I would never wanna see you be hurt."[163] However, at this moment, he inevitably defends his idea of an ethno-state and begrudgingly admits she would need to be deported for it to be actualized.

Later in the film his tone changes. Months after their first meeting, Khan receives a video call from Culpepper who shares that he is denouncing his membership with the NSM partially because of his interactions with her. He shares that he no longer wishes for Khan to be deported

explaining his discomfort with having to say the things he did to her: “That was a very uncomfortable position that you put me in,” he explains to Khan, “because it bothered me that I had to say that to you… I would not [deport you]… because we’ve become friends.” Culpepper remains a political activist on behalf of the economic struggles that large portions of the population are facing, but his goals have altered significantly as he explains how he wants to cross political and racial lines: “There’s just gotta be a way to bring both sides together. We are spending too much time talking at each other and not to each other.”[164] Khan shows the audience that even the most extreme and otherwise evil individuals are capable of change exhibited by her meeting Culpepper and sharing his story.

A similar sequence of events unfolds when Khan met Ken Parker and spent time with him and his girlfriend in their Florida home. When she visited Parker, he was preparing fliers containing anti-Jewish slogans that he would throw at synagogues and the homes of Jewish people in his town. This was typical for him, and he would do similarly hateful things toward Muslims as well. When she asked him if he thought what he was doing was wrong, he genuinely did not think it was. Khan narrates the scene explaining her purpose in putter herself in this situation: “I find Ken’s actions extremely disturbing, but I want to get behind the hateful behavior of these men to see if there is more to them.” As the night progresses, Khan expresses interest in Parker’s background and upbringing to get to know him better. They develop a friendly rapport and as someone who Parker would typically express hate towards, Khan eventually asks Parker: “Why are you nice to me?” He responds saying, “You’ve been completely respectful to me. I actually consider you to be a friend, my opinion about Muslims since I’ve been interacting with you has gone up significantly…[I will not] mess with the mosque anymore.”[165] In the course of one evening, Khan manages to change Parker’s

perspective on at least one ethnic minority in the US, again demonstrating how extremists are capable of change.

Throughout the film, Khan interacts with active extremists to better understand them and show that, while their beliefs and actions are appalling, there is still a glimmer of humanity remaining in them. This is indicated partially by the fact that she managed to get close to some of them – literally, in-person – even as a woman of color. Toward the end of her film, she interviews two former neo-Nazis who have renounced their racist extremism and spread awareness of the horrors of race-based violence. One of these former extremists, Arno Michaelis, shares why people like him would ever participate in racist extremism:

> When I see guys still active in the movement, I see suffering. I see right through to their suffering. I see individuals that have been through hell and… all sorts of trauma that they don't know how to process… so they're lashing out because they're like a wounded animal that's been cornered. It's much easier to say [hateful racist statements] than to say, 'I'm afraid.' 'I'm afraid nobody's gonna like me.' 'I'm afraid I'm not worthy of being loved.' And that's by no means an excuse for… any of that behavior…but it is a reason.[166]

Michaelis suggests extreme white supremacists are typically individuals who have experienced life hardships that have broken down their self-worth. Intense low self-esteem led them to focalize their pain toward others based on racial resentments, rather than finding healthy means to channel and cope with their trauma.

Khan ends the documentary with the story of Frank Meeink, whose experience reflects Michaelis' sentiment around extremist behavior. Meeink was raised in an impoverished Philadelphian household where he was physically and verbally abused by his father. From a young age he saw no point in living until he was recruited by a neo-Nazi gang at 13. He was empowered by the gang and found a sense of purpose through causing fear in other people through use of force. He described himself and other extremists as "ego maniacs with no self-esteem." Khan explains via narration that over time Meeink "changed his life [when] he started

making friends with people of different races."[167] Discovering the err of his ways, Meeink shared a lesson that he learned in this process: "Empathy is the greatest emotion because…we're able to turn the things that are in us, bad things that happen, bad things that we've done and we are able to turn it into a positive."[168] Meeink reoriented his life around promoting racial inclusivity and tolerance and renounced his racists extremist past.

Meeink, Michaelis, Culpepper, and Parker are examples of individuals who have experienced real traumas that manifested in feelings of low self-worth, neglect, and pain that caused them to harbor extremist ideologies. Changes in their life circumstances led them to reconfigure their belief systems to abandon their hateful ways and adopt a more inclusive worldview. Miraculously, Khan demonstrated through her documentary how approaching other people with empathy, concern, and human-worth through respectful conversation can make a difference and actualize positive social change. This is not to suggest that extreme racists and purveyors of hate *deserve* respect or even acknowledgment; Adams expressed as much in his attempt to forgive perpetuators of harmful discourse to where he still harbored some resentment toward his homophobic interlocutors.

On the contrary, Khan's documentary *White Right* suggests it is possible to approach and change the views of the most extreme, harmful others who do *not* deserve forgiveness. She is consistently critical of her interviewees' harmful behaviors and challenges them through face-to-face interactions without any indication of forgiveness. Despite her concerns for their behaviors, she takes risks and presses on with a postcritical orientation based on self-care for the care of others which does not require forgiveness. She is self-caring in the sense that she stoically maintains her own self-worth and dignity throughout the documentary and does not abandon her values nor negates the harms she experienced. She expresses care for others by engaging in a

version of the permanent conversation, one that is always readily available and that presumes those who deserve critique are still human beings that are capable of receiving empathy and being heard. Through this mode of interaction Khan demonstrates there is a chance to participate in positive social change starting from critique and ending with postcritical engagement with others if exercised with a gentle disposition, receptive mood, and optimistic attitude.

Conclusion

Rita Felski developed postcritical reading in response to the limitations she perceived in the hermeneutics of suspicion, which had become commonplace in literary critique. For her, suspicious reading yields a critical orientation empowered by skepticism, distrust, and wariness of a text's literal meaning. This orientation informs a critics disposition, attitude, and mood which are brought into critique via the ethos of their argumentation. These factors limit critique's ability to advance what comes next after critique, aside from more critique. Hence, she offers postcritical reading to emphasize how critique can reveal desirable paths forward through affective engagement and acknowledged attachment to texts.

I have argued that similar limitations of suspicious reading are found in critical rhetoric when it emphasizes discursive domination as the primary mode of historical engagement, restricting alternative for human social potential. This has motivated the argument for a possible path forward through a postcritical orientation that has similar aims to postcritical reading with the added rhetorical faculties illustrated through permanent conversation. The goal has been to build an orientation around self-care for others which carries an ethos of cooperation and relationship building to the critical practice. Informed by Foucault, Levinas, and Kennerly, this orientation and rhetorical praxis maintain that the work critics do is an extension of themselves and readily seeks to accommodate strengthening social relations through critical engagement

with the others of discourse. Adams and Khan reveal how this orientation in practice is enhanced by a disposition of gentleness, an attitude of optimism, and a mood of receptivity.

Concluding Thoughts: Summary, Limitations, Hope

This project has attempted to link together distinct voices from rhetorical studies, literary studies, moral philosophy, and human rights activism to form a coherent critical model called a postcritical orientation. The inspiration for this journey originated with the essential works of the critical turn published at the turn of the century. Contributions from the likes of Michael McGee, Philip Wander, and Raymie McKerrow helped open up possibilities for scholars to critique more than the rhetoric of singular speeches and texts. McGee's constitutive rhetoric and the ideograph helped show how language functions ideologically to shape perceptions, values, and identities. With the visual ideograph, Janis Edwards and Carol Winkler showed how ideologies persist beyond written language and can be critiqued in the visual realm as well. Wander, and later James Klumpp and Thomas Hollihan argued that rhetorical critics should turn their attention to the moral implications and vested interests embedded in discourse to offer sites where social change should be enacted. Then McKerrow theorized the influential practice critical rhetoric which is an orientation for critics to engage in the "twin critiques of domination and freedom."[169] The critique of domination entails demystifying the ways in which discourse limits individual growth and self-expression, while the critique of freedom engages with the possibility for self-actualization. Effectively, critical rhetoric is more than a mere variation of rhetorical criticism, it opens up a world of discursive interconnectedness between critics and the broader social order. It enhances our abilities to engage with discourse meaningfully to understand how they shape our very lives through ideological systems, complex and illusive power dynamics, and alignments and possible realignments of power through exercising degrees of agency. Extending and theorizing a reconfigured critique of freedom as the agential component of critical rhetoric has

been the main goal of this project. I have sought to contribute to the conversation around what is made possible through critique by shifting the emphasis to what comes 'after.'

The purpose of this contribution is similar to others who have sought to shift critical rhetoric's emphasis such as Dana Cloud, Kent Ono and John Sloop, and Michael Middleton and the scholars of participatory critical rhetoric. Cloud argued that critical rhetoric is best served by its faculties for *ideologiekritik* and should not overextend the notion that discourses equate to the material conditions of life. Kent and Sloop argued for a critical rhetoric "nearer to the social and cultural communities from which criticism derives" which eventually gave rise to their critique of vernacular and out-law discourse.[170] Later, Michael Middleton, Aaron Hess, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook came together and theorized a methodology for participatory critical rhetoric, which took an embodied approach to critical rhetoric at the sites of political activism. These adaptations illustrate how critical rhetoric is something that can be readily applied to diverse contexts, theoretical formations, and methodological approaches.

However diverse the range of critical rhetoric's applications may be, McKerrow and Herbig state have indicated the emphasis has been on the critique of domination which is but one aspect of the critical rhetoric project.[171] Rita Felski would suggest that the critique of domination is motivated by a hermeneutics of suspicion, best equipped to unmask and demystify hidden expressions of power within discourse. I maintain the critique of domination is crucial first step for meaningful social change to take place as it helps us understand where discursive sites need our attention if we are to promote an inclusive society; however, I have also argued, and sincerely believe, emphasizing the critique of domination as our primary focus shrinks the field of possibility for productive social change. What and who do we want to become? How do our modes of critique inform us about what comes *after* critique? My purpose with this project has

been to explore those questions further and offer one alternative critical model, a postcritical orientation. I argued at the end of Chapter I that Felski's postcritical reading serves as a comprehensive starting point for what would be a postcritical orientation for critical rhetoric.

Felski argues in *The Limits of Critique* that the hermeneutics of suspicion has dominated literary criticism for the past few decades. She argues not that this is a bad thing, but that suspicious critique has its limits. She highlights these limits through suspicious critique's orientation which entails certain moods, dispositions, and attitudes for critical scholarship. For example, Felski would say it is difficult to be receptive to how a text teaches us new ways of viewing the world if we are first suspicious of the ideologies embedded in its language use.

In response to the perceived limits of critique, she proposes postcritical reading to pivot critical work in the direction of affective engagement with texts, including historical ones, as coactors in a social network. She uses "postcritical" to nudge critical work past the recursive notion of critique that turns inward on texts but maintains its intellectual rigor. The goal with postcritical reading is to promote a creative, imaginative version of critique that readily accommodates themes of hope, optimism, and inspiration.

My goal has thus been to bring the work of Felski into conversation with McKerrow, to develop and add a postcritical orientation to the critical rhetoric conversation. The postcritical orientation I offer centers around a subject, inspired by Michel Foucault's *The Care of the Self*, concerned with self-care for others. Agency for the postcritical subject is guided by a sensibility that social change starts with the self and ripples out through interactions with others. Taking Felski's notion of texts as coactors, the text produced from critique is an extension of oneself (or critic) and the discourse of critique is an extension of others; therefore, presupposing a relationship between critic and discursive others. Therefore, the postcritical orientation primed

for engagement with others is suited for an optimistic disposition, mood, and attitude, which considers others as worthy of reaching through discourse as contributing members of the societal community.

Additionally, to address the questions, what comes after critique and what does it mean to engage with others discursively, there is the permanent conversation. This term adapts McKerrow's permanent criticism to the postcritical orientation, thus inviting one possibility for what comes after critique. Building from Emmanuel Levinas' ethics of the other and Michele Kennerly's analysis of *sermo*, the permanent conversation is something always readily available to critics. Informed by Levinas, the permanent conversation rests on the idea that individuals are infinitely more than the limited descriptions of their identities. Therefore, reducing them to their surface expression of character is an incomplete, sometimes even unethical means to relate to them. The Ciceronian *sermo* aims to put this understand to rhetorical praxis, to advance an ethical communicative arrangement with others that does not presuppose one person's importance over another. The underlying purpose of the permanent conversation is to effect social change through constructive, ethical discursive practices. It seeks to enhance our sense of relationship with others who are implicated by discourse to achieve cooperative ends. It is not a prescription, but an available disposition for critics to engage with others of discourse this way.

As evidenced through Tony Adams' work, the permanent conversation could look like an attempt to seek forgiveness for harms done through a discursive exchange. Adams proposes a hypothetical encounter with the others of the homophobic discourse he critiqued where he attempts to forgive them post-critique for producing harmful discourse. He admits that forgiveness is easier said than done but maintains the importance for critics to engage in postcritical work such as a permanent conversation. His honest and authentic approach is an

example of how critics can at the very least *attempt*, or invite, a conversation with the others of discourse. Further evidenced through activist Deeyah Khan's work there are potentially profound ways of achieving social change through a conversational approach oriented from self-care for others. Her profound documentary *White Right: Meeting the Enemy* displays how speaking with even the most extreme, hateful others from a place of gentleness and listening their experiences can elicit meaningful change for the better. She exemplifies the sensibilities of a postcritical orientation that optimistically attempts to reach others to enhance social relations through an ethical, egalitarian permanent conversation.

However, I recognize this postcritical orientation, the permanent conversation, and the project overall is not without limitations. There are myriad circumstances when a discursive conversation may not be available to critics, nor desirable, based on positionality. For example, if a critic seeks to investigate the rhetorical implications of institutional discourse that does not have a particular author, or other to engage, the postcritical move might look more like an open letter and the elements of the permanent conversation might be difficult to realize. Additionally, engaging others in discursive conversations runs the risk of exposing oneself to further harm, such as when Adams was reminded of the painful encounters with homophobic discourse in his attempt to forgive. His example is also on the milder end of the spectrum of possible harms to be suffered when engaging in a conversation with some others. However, if we hold ourselves back every time there is risk of exposure to harm than change would never be possible. Deeyah Khan's example shows how there are moments where taking a risk by exposing oneself to potential – even life-threatening – harms, can lead to meaningful, sometimes profound change for the better.

There are also limits to the voices and theoretical underpinnings of this project, as I recognize there are important perspectives on similar modes of critical engagement. For example, Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin's invitational rhetoric is similarly grounded in equal encounters with others oriented toward mutual understanding, rather than assertiveness.[172] Their work could inform the kind of permanent conversation I am proposing in additional to the work of Levinas and Kennerly, which have similar implications. Also, a recent essay by Josue Cisneros similarly offers a kind of postcritical orientation in the form of an "abolitionist vision" for "the critical study of border(ing) rhetorics… of the field and the academy."[173] Although he uses different terms, his argument for abolishing borders engages with the question of what comes after critique and could enhance the applicability of the current project to additional discursive contexts.

Similar arguments could be made on my decision to exclude the other adaptations of critical rhetoric from my contribution in Chapter II. I believe each of those projects (from Cloud, Ono and Sloop, and Middleton et al.) contain lines of argument that parallel to some degree or another the arguments which I have made here, and if time constraints permitted, I would enjoy spending more time considering their implications for a postcritical orientation. Despite these limitations, I hope this thesis has offered a thought-provoking reflection on the ramifications of critical rhetoric, and one possible direction for critical scholarship to consider. Social change is a process which requires collective engagement, cooperation, and communication among the disparate voices that populate our socio-political sphere. I have ventured to contribute a model for a postcritical orientation that combines historical and contemporary perspectives. I have attempted to weave a line of convergence among these perspectives around themes of self and otherly care, optimism, and empowerment through enhancing social relations. My desired

message in choosing to draw on Felski, Foucault, Levinas, Kennerly, McKerrow, Adams, and Khan is one of hope. My hope is that through conjoining diverse voices from fields such as philosophy, literary studies, human-rights activism, and rhetoric there can be newly crafted viewpoints that speak to the complexities of our time and offer imaginative constructions of possible future directions.

Endnotes

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2. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 91.

3. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 91.

4. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 91.

5. David Pellauer and Bernard Dauenhauer, “Paul Ricoeur,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Zalta, Spring 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/ricoeur/.

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7. McKerrow and Herbig, “Critical Rhetoric,” 933.

8. Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

9. Brandon Daniels and Kendall Phillips, “Between Critical and Rhetoric: McKerrow’s Contribution to Contemporary Critical Practice,” *International Journal of Communication*, [Online] 14, (2020), 912-925. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A632440209/AONE?u=unlv_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=9467144c.

10. Dilip Gaonkar, “The Revival of Rhetoric, the New Rhetoric, and the Rhetorical Turn: Some Distinctions,” *Informal Logic* 15, no. 1 (1993): 53, https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v15i1.2469.

11. Gaonkar, “The Revival,” 54.

12. The phrase “the critical turn” is borrowed from Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf’s text *The Critical Turn: Rhetoric and Philosophy in Postmodern Discourse*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).

13. Daniels and Phillips, “Between Critical,” 913.

14. McKerrow and Herbig, “Critical Rhetoric,” 931.

15. Daniels and Phillips, “Between Critical,” 914.

16. McKerrow and Herbig, “Critical Rhetoric,” 933.

17. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 91.

18. Rita Felski, “Suspicious Minds,” *Poetics Today* 32, no. 2 (2011): 215, https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-1261208.

19. Felski, *The Limits*, 3.

20. Felski, *The Limits*, 3.

21. Felski, *The Limits*, 12-13.

22. Felski, *The Limits*, 2.

23. Felski, *The Limits*, 12

24. Felski, *The Limits*, 4.

25. Gary Gutting and Johanna Oskala, “Michel Foucault,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward Zalta, Summer 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/foucault/

26. Felski, *The Limits*, 3.

27. Felski, *The Limits*, 10.

28. Felski, *The Limits*, 20-21.

29. Felski, *The Limits*, 21.

30. Felski, *The Limits*, 37.

31. Felski, *The Limits*, 38.

32. Felski, *The Limits*, 38.

33. Felski, *The Limits*, 39.

34. Felski, *The Limits*, 188.

35. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 98.

36. Felski, *The Limits*, 188.

37. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 97.

38. Dana Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (1994): 141, https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319409374493.

39. Shierry Weber, "Aesthetic Experience and Self-Reflection as Emancipatory Processes: Two Complementary Aspects of Critical Theory," in *On Critical Theory*, ed. John O'Neill, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 79.

40. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 53.

41. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 54.

42. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 55.

43. McGee (1980), Wander (1983), and McKerrow (1989) are all positively influenced by Burke in their critical turn scholarship, whereas Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca are opposed by McKerrow as being counterproductive for critical rhetoric.

44. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 56.

45. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 56.

46. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 59.

47. Gaonkar, "The Revival," 59.

48. John Campbell, "Introduction," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 250, https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319009374341.

49. Michael McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3 (1990): 274-289, https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319009374343. This text was referenced earlier John Campbell's summary introduction of this journal volume.

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51. McGee, "In Search," 238.

52. Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133-150, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638709383799.

53. Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 134.

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55. Michael McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 1 (1980): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638009383499.

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61. Michael McGee, "Another Philippic: Notes on the Ideological Turn in Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 35, no. 1 (1984): 45-50, https://doi.org/10.1080/10510978409368159; James Klumpp and Thomas Hollihan, "Rhetorical Criticism as Moral Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 1 (1989): 84-96, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638909383863.

62. McGee, "Another Philippic," 50.

63. Klumpp and Hollihan, "Rhetorical Criticism," 85 and 86.

64. Klumpp and Hollihan, "Rhetorical Criticism," 89.

65. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 91.

66. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 91.

67. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 91 and 92.

68. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 91 and 92.

69. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 93.

70. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 94.

71. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 99.

72. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 100.

73. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 100.

74. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 103.

75. Robert Hariman, "Status, Marginality, and Rhetorical Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72, no. 1 (1986): 38-54, https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/10.1080/00335638609383757.

76. Hariman, “Status, Marginality,” 48.

77. Hariman, “Status, Marginality,” 49.

78. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 100-101.

79. Hariman, “Status, Marginality,” 50.

80. Raymie McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric and the Possibility of the Subject,” in *The Critical Turn: Rhetoric & Philosophy in Postmodern Discourse*, eds. Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 61. Also, to address the timeline of McKerrow’s adoption of McGee’s text-creation, while McGee did not publish “Text, Context” until 1990, McKerrow sites a paper presentation McGee gave on this topic in 1987.

81. McKerrow, “Possibility of the Subject,” 57.

82. Michel Foucault, “Is It Really Important to Think? An Interview translated by Thomas Keenan,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 9, no. 1 (April 1982): 30–40, https://doi.org/10.1177/019145378200900102. Also, McKerrow, 96.

83. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 98.

84. Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf, “Unsettled Borders: Envisioning Critique at the Postmodern Site,” in *The Critical Turn: Rhetoric & Philosophy in Postmodern Discourse*, eds. Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 4.

85. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131.

86. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 102.

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92. Palczewski, "The Male Madonna," 374.

93. Palczewski, "The Male Madonna," 373.

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164. See *White Right*, 50:30-53:04 for the conversation between Khan and Culpepper on his new beliefs and resignation from the NSM.

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Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

August 2020 to Present — **Master of Arts in Communication Studies (Candidate)**, anticipated May 2022
University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Las Vegas, NV
Cumulative GPA: 3.82

May 2017 — **Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and Philosophy**
University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD), Duluth, MN
Cumulative GPA: 3.39

GRANTS & AWARDS

April 2022 — **Graduate Award for Outstanding Teaching**
Awarded in recognition of excellent teaching in Communication Studies at UNLV

November 2021 — **GPSA Conference Travel Award**
Awarded $530 for conference travel to 107th annual NCA conference.

UNLV Access Grant
August 2020 — Awarded $1000 for admission to UNLV Communication Studies MA program.

Outstanding Academic Achievement Award
May 2017 — Awarded for completing outstanding original research for an honors thesis in Communication Studies at UMD.
Project: Comparing theories of Chaïm Perelman and Jacques Derrida on rhetoric and justice.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Spring 2021 to Fall 2021	**Research Assistant,** University of Nevada, Las Vegas Dr. Donavan Conley: Assisted with collecting scholarship related to taste and technicity publication. Assisted with collecting contact information for *Cookery* book distribution.
November 2021	**UNLV Rebel Grad Slam Participant** Showcased original thesis research in 3-minute thesis competition with other graduate students from UNLV. Topic: Critical Rhetoric and Stoic Philosophy
Fall 2021 to Spring 2022	**COM 101 Course Development** Collaborated with Basic Course Director Dr. Nick Tatum and fellow graduate students on creating course assignments and in-class activities for UNLV's COM 101: Oral Communication course.
November 2021	**NCA Short Course: Engaged Persuasion in a Post-Truth World** Participated in a short course that explored pedagogy strategies for teaching persuasion in a political climate saturated in misinformation and conspiracy theories.
January 2022	**Grad Rebel Writing Bootcamp** Participated in a weeklong writing workshop that assisted with honing writing and composition skills specifically for developing thesis project.
April 2022	**GPSA Research Forum Poster Presentation** Showcased original thesis research on the influence and possible trajectory of critical rhetoric in campus-wide annual forum on graduate student scholarship.
April 2021	<u>Conference Presentation:</u> Presented at *Far West Popular Culture Association Annual Conference*, Las Vegas, NV. Title: Death Grips and the Sonic Ideograph

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

August 2021 to Present	**Graduate Teaching Assistant,** Communication Studies, UNLV Graduate Teaching Assistant for three sections of COM 101: Oral Communication per semester. Workload includes in-person labs, leading class discussions, and grading.
August 2021 to Present	**COM Lab Speaking Coach,** Communication Studies, UNLV Assists students with developing speeches, presentations, and public speaking skills. Also, developed website content for COM Lab and helped with marketing COM Lab to student body.

August 2020 to July 2021	**Graduate Teaching Assistant (Web-Based),** Communication Studies, UNLV Graduate Teaching Assistant for web-based COM 101: Oral Communication Course for three web-based sections per semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer Term). Workload included developing weekly instructional videos for class materials and grading.
August 2020	**Online Teaching Essentials Course,** UNLV Participated in special course on learning useful strategies for adapting courses and teaching styles to online teaching format.

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

January 2022 to Present	**GPSA Council Representative,** Communication Studies, UNLV Participates in monthly council meetings as the Communication Studies Master's program cohort representative. Advocates for student rights and provides meeting reports to cohort members.
January 2022 to Present	**GPSA Rules and Ethics Committee Member,** Communication Studies, UNLV Participates in bi-monthly meetings on topics such as executive committee election rules as the Communication Studies Master's program representative.

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

COM 710 Survey of Communication Studies
COM 711 Rhetorical Critical Research Methods
ENG 703 Survey of Literary Theory and Criticism
COM 730 Theories of Rhetorical Communication
COM 794 Special Readings: Rhetoric of Identity
ENG 775 Theories of Feeling, Body, and Self

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