Where Professional Writing Meets Social Change: The Grant Proposal as a Site of Hospitality

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This essay builds upon prior attempts to foster linkages between the disciplines of Composition Studies and professional writing. I take up Jennifer Bay’s suggestion that service learning is a site for connection and hospitality (in a Derridean sense) between these disciplines, advocating for and at the same time complicating Bay’s proposal. Rather than offering straightforward hospitality, I posit, service learning sites present opportunities to critique, welcome, and revise the multiple demands of composing today.

In her 2010 Composition Studies article “Writing Beyond Borders: Re-thinking the Relationship Between Composition Studies and Professional Writing,” Jennifer Bay offers a path for rapprochement between composition studies and professional writing, fields that are often thought of as bounded by disciplinary ideology, compartmentalized by separate faculties, staff, students, and research pursuits. Bay proposes that the three sites of emerging technologies, work, and service learning comprise “threshold spaces” for the two disciplines to come together (29). In calling for rapprochement, Bay adopts the frame of the Derridean notion of hospitality as a way to invite scholars in both disciplines to “say yes to what shows up, say yes to all possibilities before we become engulfed in the moment of (self) identification as other” (30–31).

Derridean hospitality, I propose here, is not as straightforwardly welcoming as Bay’s account might suggest, and it is this more complicated notion of hospitality that better fits the way in which our two disciplines could build accord in the offshore sites Bay proposes. Through a rhetorical analysis of a funding proposal framed by authethnographic reflections on my professional grant writing experience, I describe how service learning opportunities, focusing here on the case of nonprofit proposal writing, do serve as threshold spaces where hospitality is enacted. But these nonprofit sites are not neutral spaces any more than any other discourse community, and rather than offering the opportunity for uncomplicated syntheses or reconciliations, they offer a range of opportunities for students and researchers to acknowledge and critique the multiple demands of composing in today’s world.

A note on methodology: ethnography as a research method in rhetoric and composition involves, as Matthew Ortoleva notes, techniques such as participant observation, interviews, and textual analysis, and is an approach to understanding social behavior as situated in time and place rather than
as objectively renderable from a situation or text (60). I have chosen to include my textual analysis within an autoethnographic framework principally because I see this framework as best able to permit my drawing upon my 12 years of experience as a nonprofit grantwriter as part of my analysis. I use the term “autoethnographic reflections” to make clear that I intend my remarks as looking back from the present day, rather than drawing on field notes taken at the time.

**The Call for Hospitality in Composing**

Nonprofit writing *hosts* different rhetorical ideologies, and as I will propose, these ideologies hosted within nonprofit writing come into contact with one another in ways that echo Derrida’s insistence that hospitality involves a measure of imposition. To motivate this project, let us look at the roots of the call for hospitality in rhetoric and composition.

Drawing from the essay “Writing Offshore” by Cynthia Haynes, Jennifer Bay shares Haynes’ concern that Composition Studies has taught and prized the argument as a rhetorical mode, even though the logic behind professional decision-making in the workplace is not based on traditional argumentative forms such as rhetoric or dialectic. Corporate action is not based in anything that represents a process of reasoning, but on the profit motive, on “the logic of advanced multinational capitalism, which is *groundless*” (30). Bay uses Haynes’ critique of argument as the dominant pedagogy in a groundless, capitalist world in order to draw attention to another disconnect in the landscape, the separation between Composition Studies and professional writing, by which she means business and technical writing and communication (43). Even as traditional argumentation cannot help structure our understanding of the tectonic shifts in the world today, neither can the boundaries of disciplinarity: “We need a new way of making sense of this constantly shifting ground, but as Haynes demonstrates, it can’t be the ground of argument, and I would go farther to say that it also can’t be the ground of disciplinarity” (33).

Bay calls for “a culture of hospitality” between professional writing and Composition Studies, a move that implies not only that the disciplines are disunified, but that the two disciplines *should* move closer together (29). Why are they not unified, and why should they move closer together? To answer the first question, Bay maintains that Composition Studies and professional writing have had a tension with one another due in part to the former’s association with cultural theory and critiques of capitalist ideology. “Professional writing’s connection to business and industry creates tensions with composition studies, which often aligns itself with cultural and post-Marxist critique” she writes, noting that Composition’s “attachment to academic writing distances it from professional writing’s focus on workplace writing situations” (36).

Certainly, the work of compositionists such as Lester Faigley and James Berlin, while not *prima facie* appearing to espouse disciplinary disunion,
sought an ideological distinction between Composition Studies and what happens in the workplace. Faigley argued that Richard Lanham’s *Revising Business Prose* was not only amoral but internally inconsistent with its own writerly tenets: it proposes that there are two main reasons for revising business prose, namely efficiency and ego (i.e., sincerity), but how is it possible, Faigley asks, for most of us to write sincere prose in a memo laying off mass numbers of workers? “Bottom line efficiency as practiced in business,” writes Faigley, “continually conflicts with the human feelings that Lanham advocates” (136–7). In turn, Linda Flower and John Hayes’ invitation to the writing student, that “whatever your goals are, you are interested in discovering better ways to achieve them” (672), concerned James Berlin, because it reinscribed the rational self-interest of the capitalist. “Nowhere,” he writes of Flower and Hayes, “do [they] question the worth of the goals pursued by the manager, scientist, or writer” (672). Value-neutrality toward the commitments of writing is a recipe for training people to climb the corporate ladder, preserving the unfair class system.

Bay next argues that these disciplines that have “tried to forge separate disciplinary identities” (30) could benefit from greater solidarity, thus her call for hospitality. Bay points out that the disciplines are already connected and while they may hold distinct ideologies and goals, the idea that Composition Studies can critique the workplace from outside is mistaken:

Look around and we see more change than stability: students change majors multiple times based on job possibilities; faculty spend years searching for full-time employment and often must pursue other careers due to the lack of positions; workers make career changes or return to school for job training and ensured future income; and elderly retirees must work to supplement their subsidized incomes. These are just a few images of the constantly shifting landscape on which Composition Studies attempts to build its constituency. (32)

In other words, professors already exist in a corporate hierarchy (and indeed, I would add, actively comply with it by sitting on appointment committees, developing labor policies for staff, admitting students through need-aware—not need-bind—admissions policies, and so forth). Even academic writing itself is not insulated from “corporate logic,” as Bay points out, and I would support that observation by noting that funding often drives the direction that research programmes take; journal articles are written toward certain audiences, and so forth. Composition courses are often drafted to fulfill university objectives, such as retention initiatives, and first-year composition courses, as Ira Shor and others have noted, earn more money than they cost to run, thanks in part to their low-wage workforce (Parascondola).¹

Bay realizes that the two disciplines can help one another: professional writing can help with integrating technologies into the curriculum, for instance, and “the critique of industry and culture” that one finds in com-
Position courses “can be brought to bear on professional writing courses” in order to help students critique, and possibly creatively respond to, corporate culture and injustice (38).

Supporting this call for hospitality are the hybrid majors that some departments have created. Consider an analysis of 68 writing majors in American universities by Balzhiser and McLeod in 2010. As these researchers note, and as I have also found in an unpublished study of the University of Rhode Island’s proposal for an undergraduate writing major in 2011, preprofessional education is a primary goal of a number of burgeoning undergraduate writing majors, tempting us to believe that the fields can and do go hand-in-hand. The Balzhiser and McLeod data indicates that within the 68 writing majors they reviewed (41 of these considered “professional/rhetoric” majors and 27 “liberal arts” writing majors), there were a total of 68 individual courses offered in the area of “technical/business/workplace/organizational communication/writing” (421).

Furthermore, the URI writing major is a locus where professional writing and Composition Studies are overseen by a single rhetoric and composition faculty, and the gateway course itself provides instruction in the canons of rhetoric even as it requires research on professional writers (Balzhiser and McLeod 419). In my analysis of URI’s founding documents, I identified language pertaining to the proposed Writing and Rhetoric major that evokes the dual goals we have been speaking of, goals marking both professional and critique-driven demands. The URI writing major, for example, proposes to be a site where students can “recognize, value, and understand different cultural values” (URI 3–4) as well as a place that would emphasize “students’ ethical development” and their “capabilities as critical and independent thinkers” (3). At the same time, however, this writing major designed as a liberal arts degree also “emphasizes the applied arts and technical skills that employers value” (1). In other words, rather than an “either-or” sensibility, the URI major proposes a “both-and” ethic.

Hybrid majors such as URI’s suggest that the disciplinary distinctions between Composition Studies and professional writing are not essential, rigid boundaries: the properties of one discipline bleed into the other, making some form of disciplinary nominalism therefore in order. (For a discussion of nominalism, see Appiah’s chapter in Appiah and Gutmann. Writing about the nature of the boundaries distinguishing biological species from one another and distinguishing the supposed races, Appiah describes nominalism as the position that such boundaries are “classificatory convenience[s]” rather than boundaries found “in nature” [67].) Indeed, one upshot of the following analysis of grant writing is that the difference in what we do when we ask students to think ethically and communally versus when we ask them to think profitably does not invoke disciplinarity, in the same sense that thinking mathematically may differ from thinking anthropologically. In other words, the Faigley and Berlin objections to business writing imply that the competition among different rhetorical goals in a given writing task can create
ideological conflict. So sometimes thinking ethically and thinking profitably imply some level of incompatibility, for instance in their examples. But as we will see, thinking ethically and thinking profitably can work together toward the same goal, especially in domains such as grant writing.

In the discussion that follows, I borrow Steven Katz’ labels of ethics and expediency to tease out the two core values that seem to be driving concerns that, in my view, have more to do with rhetorical goals than disciplinary boundaries. In 1992, Katz critiqued writing instruction, positing that technical communication (considered a form of deliberative rhetoric, or rhetoric concerning decisions about future action) places expediency over other values. Using the example of a Nazi-era memo discussing the specifications of vehicles that killed people with carbon monoxide, he charges that technical writing would evaluate positively all business correspondence that displayed formally desirable characteristics of deliberative writing (e.g., a purpose statement, use of topoi) regardless of moral content. “By any formal criteria in technical communication,” he writes, “[the Nazi memo] is an almost perfect document” (256). Katz suggests that those who teach professional writing and even deliberative rhetoric (by extension implicating Composition Studies here too) are complicit in promoting an ideology that privileges efficiency. “[D]o we, as teachers and writers and scholars, contribute to this ethos by our writing theory, pedagogy, and practice, when we consider techniques of document design, audience adaptation, argumentation, and style without considering ethics?” Katz asks (271). These terms “ethics” and “expediency” I will use to denote the two different values that can be seen to drive rhetorical goals in writing, the first focused on doing what is good and the second on doing what brings about a desired end.

Bay’s key insight, for my purposes, is her recognition that service learning can be a “threshold space” where a “culture of hospitality” can be fostered between professional writing and Composition Studies (31). As far as motivating service learning’s role in this rapprochement, Bay suggests that community engagement is a practice “predicated on hospitality; it is the development of a relationship of trust and openness among teacher, student, institution, and community agency” and that in this space, professional writing and Composition scholars can “enact and learn hospitality” (41–2). In this utopian world, service learning sites would be zones of communal goodness where ethical reasoning prevails.

The reality of community agencies, however, is that they compete with other agencies for scarce funding streams, meaning that their goals are multivariate, encompassing rhetorical aims and acts of both ethics and efficiency. That is why, I suggest, we must explore what exactly the hospitality that Bay calls for would look like—how service learning sites can be sites of hospitality, and what shape that hospitality takes.
Writing in *Acts of Religion*, Derrida teases out a certain paradoxical nature of hospitality: “[I]f I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the hôte as invited, there is no hospitality” (362, italics mine). Derrida wants to say that the primary act of hosting, the act of extending a welcome to another, involves welcoming some measure of imposition. Hospitality connotes welcoming, then, even as it means being prepared to be overtaken (361). Hospitality is an aporia: not the unproblematic welcoming of another with open arms, hospitality involves countenancing the “other” and giving up or sacrificing something desired (e.g., time, space, dogma) in order to become the host. After all, we do not host what is already an integral part of us—our own beliefs or identities, for example. Bearing in mind this fuller conception of hospitality can help us make sense of how the rapprochement that Bay proposes could take form in the context of service learning.

To begin to explicate a Derridean conception of hospitality, consider that nonprofit organizations are hybrid entities—they are legally-recognized private corporations but they cannot distribute profits to any individuals and must instead use them toward public purposes (this is called the non-private inurement clause). As domains, they play host to professional aims and identities as well as social criticism and critique. These competing ideologies meet in many corners of the nonprofit organization, especially in the search for funding. In what follows, I analyze excerpts from a funding proposal that I co-authored to illustrate the distinct writing tasks facing the grant writer, and how they enact different ideological commitments. My methodology is based in qualitative discourse analysis and authethnography. While my analysis is not intended to propose generalizable conclusions, it serves to pedagogically illustrate how grant proposals can be approached as rhetorical documents, documents that are the products of different and sometimes competing commitments that create hospitable (and inhospitable) tensions.

Recently, as a consultant, I co-authored a proposal for an organization I will call “Child Care Partners,” which trains women to be home child care providers. From a rhetorical standpoint, the purpose of the proposal was to win funds from a granting agency (obviously a professional aim), and a sub-purpose was to provide a persuasive critique of the social order that perpetuates the situation for which the funds are needed. The social critique appeared largely in the need statement, a component of many grant proposals. We spent several paragraphs of the need statement discussing the situation of poverty in the location in question, and how that poverty affects people’s life prospects. For instance, we noted that “[T]he challenges for poor people in [our state] begin at birth,” and “about 71,000 children...
who need caretakers have no access to licensed care, because [our state], like many other states, does not have enough spots available” (Barrett 3).

Through an analysis of our audience (i.e., the intended funder), we honed the kind of social critique that would “sing” to this funder. This honing toward an audience we might think of as a professional act, an act of expediency. In the case of Child Care Partners, we employed a specific version of social change language. We might call it, following Ellen Cushman’s work on micro-levels of interaction, social change that engages in challenging one’s daily circumstances (12–13), rather than “emancipatory” (14) change that upends an entire social structure. In Cushman’s vein, training mothers to operate family daycares is indeed changing the customary, unjust flow of events; the rhetorical act of seeking funds for this project counts as an act of social change too: it is using language to challenge the injustices of daily life. Here, we positioned the organization as way of opening the benefits of the economic order to more people: “Child Care Partners addresses both workforce development and child care in one single swoop” (Barrett 3). In sum, writing the need statement for this proposal was on the one hand an act of professional writing and at the same time a rhetorical attempt to create social change. Bay’s premise that service learning can serve as a threshold space is borne out. Moreover, rigid disciplinarity does not apply—whether one is a composition studies student writing a grant or a professional writing student writing the grant, one models the same rhetorical goals.

These rhetorical acts of proposal development, choices designed for expedient and ethical purposes at the same time, offer the service learning student opportunities for social action, reflection, and professional development. Next, in writing the program statement or narrative of the proposal, the service learning student must describe the cause for which the grant is being sought. Gathering information for the proposal puts students in contact with program leaders and participants. There, students may participate in or observe ideological discourses about the injustices of the current world order that fuse theory and practice in ways that cannot be taught in the classroom alone. Students may come to understand the promises and the shortcomings of real-life social action programs.

As Robert McEachern points out, composition courses and professional writing courses engaged in service learning often emphasize different aspects of these service learning experiences: Composition Studies focuses more on critical reflection, while professional writing emphasizes practical, hands-on experience (213). It should be apparent how proposal-writing provides practical experience, but it also provides ripe opportunity for theoretical discourse: as the service learning student writes, she comes to appreciate the complex relationship between text, author, audience, and reality, concepts from the composition course. You have the social program as it unfolds in the world, the program as it is communicated in operating manuals, memos, and spoken discourse, and the program as written in a grant proposal. Proposal writers will sometimes find that the program they construct through
their descriptive choices and rhetorical devices bears only passing similarity to the “actual” program on the ground. Proposal writing can therefore be a helpful way of actualizing academic approaches to framing rhetorical production and ontology, such as James Kinneavy’s four kinds of discourse emphasizing different pieces of the communication triangle.\textsuperscript{3} For instance, while I drafted the Child Care Partners proposal, I kept in mind the funder (decoder) I intended to persuade, but well before drafting the proposal I discussed the project at length with the Executive Director, thus constituting reference discourse with its focus on realism. Students can also be encouraged to identify stages of the proposal development process where as writers they invoke literary discourse and where they invoke expressive writing.

The construction of the remaining sections of the grant proposal, which can include \textit{organizational information}, \textit{outcomes}, and \textit{evaluation} sections, involves similar modeling of the rhetorical goals, the evolving text, the social context, and the program in question. Here is where the relationship between text and reality can become one of co-construction: outcomes sections often do configure programs not simply vice versa, because once the outcomes are in place, and funding awarded, staff must strive to meet them. Often in these situations, writing a proposal writes certain aspects of the project along with it. One outcome in the Child Care Partners proposal was a “[research report] discussing the prospects of expanding our model” (Barrett 1) beyond the state in which we operated; lo and behold, a research report became part of the project. The seemingly obtuse theoretical idea that texts can construct reality becomes concretely exemplified through the process of proposal writing.

Finally, the very nature of the rhetorical analysis and enactment involved in authoring a successful grant proposal will steep the service-learning student in the discourses of professional work and the use of specific business skills such as marketing. The student learns the simple skill of reviewing a funder’s website—and any memos regarding conversations with program officers—and decides what buzzwords might be inserted into a proposal, for instance. Because the funder I was working with had a “Community” grant program that cited an interest in “children and family services” we ensured that the proposal stressed Child Care Partners’ value for both providers and children enrolled. These rhetorical choices are expedient in that we were not thinking about writing the “best” proposal in terms of fidelity to some writerly ideal, but writing the one that would get us the funding.

\textbf{Grantwriting: Logic of Persuasion and Style}

As seen with Child Care Partners, the proposal’s rhetorical purpose could be said to be winning a grant, which involved persuading a private foundation to decide in its favor. Proposal writing may therefore best be thought of as deliberative rhetoric, deciding on future action. Our proposal was written in multiple modes of discourse, including narrative, descriptive, and argumentative forms. As James Kinneavy notes, the narrative mode of
discourse may serve to introduce a topic and initiate ethical and pathetic appeals in the context of persuasive discourse (268). Our proposal’s narrative, abridged here, establishes the organization’s ethos:

Child Care Partners began by helping parents in [city], especially single mothers of young children, meet the [Welfare Reform Act’s] welfare-to-work requirements by training them to open family childcares. In time, Child Care Partners established both a licensing component, helping unlicensed caregivers meet health and safety standards necessary for state licensing, and a childcare network, offering an array of support to licensed providers. In ten short years, it has become a leading voice in state policy circles. (Barrett 3)

The argumentative discourse in our proposal drew upon enthymemes and examples that involved the logic of the dual appeals of ethics and expediency. The enthymeme that formed the entire arc of our proposal went roughly like this (excerpts are followed by parenthetical paraphrases):

1. About 71,000 children who need caretakers have no access to licensed care . . . the burden of poverty does not end there . . . wages for [state’s] lowest paid workers have fallen over the past 20 years. (Poor children lack childcare and poor adults suffer from low wages)
2. Child Care Partners addresses both workforce development and childcare in one single swoop. (Our organization helps poor children get care and poor adults earn wages)
3. The help of several national funders will be critical not only to provide needed funds but to lend legitimacy to our expansion project. (We need your money to do our work)
4. (Therefore, you ought to give us the grant we requested)

The enthymeme, then, involved both appeals to ethics (premises 1 and 2) and expediency in the sense of obtaining material rewards (premise 3 and implied conclusion 4).

Stylistically, proposals conform to the vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics of mainstream English. There is perhaps nothing more important to a grant proposal than impeccable grammar and spelling, for as cultural studies has taught us, the ability to expertly handle dominant discourse is viewed as a window into the capability of an individual or an organization to implement its program and, ultimately, to acquit itself admirably of the funds provided.

Service Learning: Complicating Hospitality

Thus far, we have spoken about the ways in which grant proposal-writing hosts both critique and professional discourses, in a hybridized platform
that fuses and confuses disciplinary boundaries. Why, then have I spoken about the *inhospitality* of the service learning space?

Quite often, writers struggle considerably when the demands of the goal of obtaining funds and the goal of changing the world compete with, rather than complement, one another. *Overpromising*—described as one of the most common mistakes of new investigators by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development—results when one affirms in a written proposal more ambitious goals than are practicable, usually in order to impress a potential funder (Cologna and Cluzeau, par. 12). Many funding institutions refuse to support general operations, perhaps harkening back to their capitalist origins and belief that enterprises should become “self-sustaining”—despite the unwieldy constraints on sustainability imposed by charitable missions and non-private inurement clauses. This tenuous situation causes organizations to have to build “incremental” activities into grant proposals, stretching staffing and budgets to the point where some grants barely confer any benefit at all, and also heralding expedient and highly unethical choices. Confronting a deficit, one organization I served previously used gifts from a prominent donor to pay down debt without acknowledging this use to the donor. (I discovered the questionable practice while reviewing donor correspondences.)

The aforementioned research report for Child Care Partners may have been a mild example of overpromising, in that I suggested advancing the idea in order to appeal to the funder rather than because the project actually called for it. I felt as if the funder needed some piece of the larger project that they alone would fund. The empirical study of fundraising is a new field, and while there is a growing body of research on the effects of, for instance, thank-you gifts on giving decisions (e.g., see Newman and Shen) there is less to be said about the drivers behind foundation decisionmaking. So I worked instinctively, with little empirically predictive basis to justify whether that research report would have increased the likelihood of a grant. The best outcome for Child Care Partners would have been, of course, winning the grant without promising extra work. In situations where that outcome is not certain, writers make choices reflecting their valuation of different potential outcomes. For instance, if I felt there were a greater probability of winning an award with the research report included, I might be less concerned about the extra, seemingly mission-diverting work. However, diverting effort away from mission-related activities might be more of a concern to a program director than a grant writer, meaning that the program director may prefer to risk a declination from a funder rather than propose a grant that would create a burden. A scenario such as this illustrates ethics and expedience working orthogonally to one another, because expedience (taken as a means to an end) should suggest always (or usually) pursuing a given grant, whereas ethics should imply possibly turning one away if it represents a dilution of mission.
Another common problem according to many observers of the nonprofit world (Jonker and Meehan 60) is *mission creep*: expanding the organization’s mission in order to obtain funding. Again, lured by the promise of funding, grant writers may expand the organization’s programming in order to reach different funding pockets. Child Care Partners was excellent at staying on message. However, government cutbacks caused one potential funder to propose that our organization focus on forging entrepreneurial partnerships with nearby stakeholders. While seemingly plausible, the suggestion represented a different philosophy of child care (market-financed instead of public-financed) and might have been time-intensive and detracting from Child Care Partners’ public policy orientation. The leaders opted against that funder’s suggestion, preserving their focus on a more progressive and less commercial conception of social change. A more expedient option focused more on maximizing income would have involved exploring the market model, and I was more inclined to pursue the funder’s suggestion, being the persuasive writer with the rhetorical uber-goal of winning grants. Now, one could argue that a social venture like this would be not only pragmatic and expedient but ethically valid, which serves to illustrate the richness of service learning as a site for practicing and theorizing hospitality.

While I am aware of no extensive studies on the problems of overpromising and mission creep, informal conversations during my career as well as my own experience tell me that most grant writers have encountered these tensions in their work and have had to make rhetorical choices that positioned the proposal in a particular space of the (in)hospitality zone that Bay speaks of. Professional writers, in my experience, tend to want to err on the side of sacrificing output and mission for more awards, whereas program staff will tend to err on the side of conserving mission and output and “leaving money on the table.” These office conversations are often contentious and heated and unfortunately, the typical grant writing environment does not afford the full opportunity for writers and managers to reflectively weigh each (in) hospitable demand and consider its long-term costs and benefits. While the large university I once served has actually returned gifts that compromised its academic mission, smaller and fledgling organizations have no such luxury.

One final point of (in)hospitality between professional writing demands and the ideals of Composition Studies are the stylistic sacrifices entailed by grant writing. Often times, grant writers feel compelled to parrot funder language, sacrificing their Pulitzer ambitions for prose such as “asset-based,” “capacity-building,” and “means-tested.” The proposal I have been describing featured wonderful nominalizations and jargon describing “our secondary target population,” (Barrett 4) “low quality learning environment,” (1) and “innovative training programs” (1).

Although I am sympathetic to Kathryn Rentz and Ashley Mattingly’s position that service learning students, at least those earning professional writing degrees, serve as consulting professionals first and change agents second (115), I think that having service learning students reflect critically
upon decisions made in cases where competing ends seemed at work, explain why they represented compromises, and perhaps even suggest alternatives builds not only fluency in various discourses, but the ability to critique the discourses from within, rather than simply from without. After all, as Bay recognizes, professors do not sit outside of the discourses of capitalism, and we must train our students to level their own critiques while fully conscious of the implications of their own choices. Furthermore, and as a more pragmatic point, service learning students’ reflection will help organizations that do not have the resources to deeply analyze the implications of their choices. What seems like professionally helping an organization by supporting an expanded mission or overstretched scope of work may hurt in the long run.

**Conclusion**

The crucible of the nonprofit worksite forces connection, consensus, dis-sensus, and dialogue. The idea that hospitality involves imposition and negotiation is a metaphor that, I have proposed, best captures the way that rhetoric enters into and makes meaning in this crucible.

Furthermore, the disciplines that comprise writing are not and should not be taken to be governed by rigid, essentialist boundaries. As I have tried to show, the writing practices that make up the nonprofit sector expose such boundaries as impracticable and unsustainable. As we prepare college students to enter the real world, service learning opportunities can help students build metacognitive awareness of their own rhetorical choices as agents and as future professionals. And in order to reap the most from our service learning programs, we must understand that these programs do not unfold in uncomplicatedly neutral sites of hospitality but in fractured and decentered locales, fractured partly because of their hosts’ dual identities as businesses on the one hand and agents of social change on the other.

While nonprofit workspaces, because of their own hybridity, are a special case for rapprochement, other spaces invite exploration as well as Bay has noted. Social Enterprise Europe, for instance, seeks to expand capitalist practices beyond the sole aim of profitability to embrace social causes, and related endeavors such as microenterprise provide promising avenues for rhetoricians to explore values of ethics and expediency (“What is”). The move away from dichotomous thinking about dubious binaries such as capitalism and academia, professional writing and Composition Studies, and business and nonprofits is surely best accomplished by practicing hospitality through engaged learning and scholarship.

**Notes**

1. Marc Bousquet, Stanley Aronowitz, Michael Bérubé and others have examined the implications of treating the university as a material enterprise (Grabill et al. 219). Of course, if knowledge is the commodity of the university, then knowledge products such as academic papers and ideas exist in that
material framework, and Composition Studies simply is professional writing. The boundary collapses altogether.

2. The discussion that follows was conducted with the permission of my client organization, who wishes to remain anonymous. The organization’s Executive Director reviewed a draft of this essay prior to publication. My experience with this organization enriched me personally and professionally, and I am grateful to be able to include my observations of our work in this article.

3. Discourse focusing on either the encoder (expressive), the decoder (persuasive), reality (reference), or the signal (literary) (Kinneavy 38–39).

**Works Cited**


