

Composition Forum 34, Summer 2016

Textbook Pathos: Tracing a Through-Line of Emotion in Composition Textbooks



Tim Jensen

Abstract: Gretchen Flesher Moon's 2003 analysis of emotion's treatment in composition textbooks revealed that pathos "gets very short shrift" or none at all. Since then, however, conversations regarding affect and emotion have advanced in both scope and sophistication. This proliferation of scholarly activity has brought the passions of persuasion to a new level of prominence. This essay asks to what extent and in what ways these developments have manifested in representations of pathos in composition textbooks. In doing so, the article traces a through-line from Moon's essay to now in order to provide a broader perspective of pathos in composition studies, and concludes with three recommendations for moving forward: 1) define emotion; 2) specify emotions; and 3) replace warnings and limits with complexity and curiosity.

Of all the elements of classical rhetorical theory that have survived the attrition of history to influence current composition instruction, none have endured with the stamina and sweep of the Aristotelian appeals. If you are an undergraduate student taking a composition course, chances are high that you will encounter the rhetorical triptych of logos, ethos, and pathos. Chances are equally high that this encounter will initially take place through an assigned textbook reading, as the overwhelming majority of contemporary composition textbooks and rhetoric primers include mention of the three appeals in some fashion. In these texts, students are often prompted to identify various arguments' use of appeals and then to label and analyze the moments in which an author or speaker is appealing specifically to their reason, for their trust, or to their emotions. Students are similarly encouraged to consider these appeals when constructing their own arguments, and advised to include all three for the best chances of persuasion.

It will come as little surprise to readers of this special issue that of the three appeals, pathos has received, to put it mildly, uneven treatment in textbooks over the past quarter century. Gretchen Flesher Moon's analysis of twenty-five popular rhetorics in circulation between 1998 and 2003 revealed that pathos "gets very short shrift" or none at all. In "The Pathos of *Pathos: The Treatment of Emotion in Contemporary Textbooks*," Moon notes that the rich and varied history of pathos in rhetorical thought—a tradition spanning Plato to Perelman, Aristotle to Carl Rogers—"has faded and blurred beyond recognition, remaining only a shadow, a whisper of its former self in the textbooks that construct the rhetorical tradition for college students" (35). The diminished account of pathos that is proffered instead, she laments, does more than disrespect one of the richest threads in rhetorical thought; it strips students of the opportunity to approach emotion and its examination as vital to civic engagement and pursuit of "the good life, the reasoned life, the self-examined life" (41).

Since Moon's essay appeared in *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies*, however, conversations regarding affect and emotion have advanced in both scope and sophistication. This proliferation of scholarly activity—called "the affective turn" in some spheres and the "new pathos" in others—has brought the passions of persuasion to a level of prominence few would have imagined thirteen years ago. This essay asks to what extent and in what ways these developments have manifested in construals of pathos in contemporary composition textbooks and rhetoric readers. The stakes of such an investigation are rooted in the fact that rhetoric and composition textbooks remain a primary conduit for introducing, defining, and delineating pathos for college writers—and often for instructors, too. It serves our students and field well, then, to consider not only how pathos is currently characterized in textbooks, but also how it might—and ought to—be characterized moving forward.

Specifically, I review twenty-five textbooks published after 2010 and in high circulation, selected from a range of

publishers. My aim is to bring the research thread initiated by Moon up to date and, in the process, create a through-line in our conversations regarding pathos and its instruction. I use the term “through-line” with conscious regard to its origin in Russian theater director Constantin Stanislavski, who developed the concept to help his actors better understand how individual units of action were linked together into a broader narrative arc. Stanislavski observed the actors in his troupe routinely misinterpret exigencies informing the scenes and the motivation of characters within them; the misstep, he realized, occurred because their frame of reference was too contained. What was believed to be concentrated focus was actually myopic assessment. Stanislavski’s new technique called on actors to read for the through-line—that “calculated harmonious interrelationship and distribution of the parts in a whole”—and allow that broader perspective to inform their actions at all stages (35). In the same way, the goal of this essay is one of building perspective, with the ultimate aim of improving our interpretive capacities for the specific scenes in which we work with the concept of pathos in our classrooms. A through-line traced to our current moment will enable scholars and instructors of composition to better inform our individual practices and, in turn, continue to refine and calibrate our collective perspective on emotion’s role in composition.

Revisiting and Situating Textbook Analysis

Scholars in rhetoric and composition have long recognized the disciplinary power and pedagogical import of textbooks; consequently, analysis of textbook content has well-established precedent. In his 1978 CCC article, “Composition Textbooks and the Assault on Tradition,” Donald Stewart wonders what impact fifteen years of strident scholarly critique on current-traditional pedagogies have wrought. “To what extent have these assaults,” he asks, “been reflected in widely used composition textbooks?” (174). Stewart solicits “twenty-eight well-known publishers [for] textbooks which had sales exceeding 100,000 copies” and subsequently reviews 34 of the field’s best-selling textbooks, handbooks, and readers to see how they register over a decade’s worth of “work [by] people like Corbett, Rohman, Burke, Pike, Zoellner, [and] Weathers” (174). Of the 34 textbooks reviewed, 27 were “strictly current-traditional” in approach, despite fifteen years of professional consensus on the failings of current-traditional techniques and the paired promotion of alternatives. Stewart’s essay provides two lessons: Analyzing textbooks for the impact of scholarship has a long tradition within rhetoric and composition, and the gap between what is discussed in journals and what is communicated to students can be measured in terms of decades.

In “Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline,” Robert J. Connors chooses a military metaphor to frame the relationship between textbooks and scholarship. Writing in 1986 he notes that, “[t]he history of research on writing and composition teaching from the 1940s through the present is a history of epistemological warfare [wherein] progressive theoretical and empirical research [are] struggling with entrenched traditional pedagogy” (191). What makes it such a curious war, Connor observes, is the “constant movement of troops—that is, teachers and ‘composition theorists’—back and forth from one camp to another” (191). The avenue for change, he contends, is improving teacher training. Publishers respond much more to the needs of instructors than the desires of theorists.^[1] Composition instructors who receive little training and inadequate professional support will naturally lean on the authority of the textbook to instruct their students. Kathleen Welch echoes as much in “Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production: The Place of Theory in Writing Pedagogy,” arguing that if any progress is to occur with textbook content, the first step is to “recognize the probability that the textbooks are instructional material more important for the writing teacher than for the writing student” and are “persuasive places where new teachers of writing are trained and where experienced ones reinforce the training” (271). The strategy, then, is to train teachers “to stand by themselves,” as Connors puts it, so that we will be more free to “re-invent textbooks in the image of their best nature—as our tools, not crutches we depend on for support” (192).

Those arguments, however, were waged in the mid-1980s. Our discipline has expanded tremendously in the three decades since—in sheer size, in the range of research areas and methodologies, and in attention paid to teacher training and professional development opportunities. Teachers of rhetoric and composition now have access to a wealth of sophisticated pedagogies and supplemental materials, most notably through online means, but also through a vibrant constellation of conferences and workshops. The result is an increasingly savvy field of teachers and scholars who, in turn, engender new pedagogical approaches and sow a sense of vitality and urgency into our discipline.

Then are the contentions of Connors and Welch still relevant thirty years later? I believe so. Introductory composition courses remain largely staffed by precarious labor, whether by adjuncts in short-term, part-time, and almost always under-paying contracts or by graduate students, whose tuition remission is dependent on the teaching of multiple sections, for which they more often than not receive paltry stipends. These economic realities have an impact on textbooks at every stage, from creation to marketing. Although evolutions in our field warrant a tempering of certain claims—there are, after all, more and better-trained rhetoricians and compositionists than perhaps ever before—we must not neglect the perspectives offered by Connors and Welch, which remind us that the distribution of

scholarship, whether in monographs, journals, or textbooks, is bound up with economic forces that constrain as much as they enable. Textbook content, in other words, will not change solely on account of a strong academic argument.

Acknowledging the reality of our shared rhetorical situation, of course, does not release us from the professional predicament that Connors gestures towards when he notes the curious “movement of troops—that is, teachers and ‘composition theorists’—back and forth from one camp to another” (191). The implication here is of dual commitments at odds with each other; in short, there is a version of rhetoric that we speak of in our scholarship and a separate, often quite distinct version of rhetoric we present through our textbooks. My contention is certainly not that there should be only one version, but rather that the gap between the two be significantly mitigated. Moreover, the persistent and recurring dilemmas sketched in this section serve as a reminder for the need to routinely review textbook content and critically examine the relationship between textbooks and the many facets of our field they influence.

The Treatment of Emotion in (Formerly) Contemporary Composition Textbooks

In her review of twenty-five textbooks published between 1998 and 2003, Gretchen Flesher Moon discovers that the vast majority of them pay “scant attention to emotions” (35) and the concept of pathos. Indeed, 20 percent of textbooks in the study make no reference to pathos, emotions, or feelings at all. When emotions do receive focus, the manner in which the topic is handled may actually do more damage and disrespect to the concept of pathos than if it were merely elided. On the whole, Moon’s 2003 essay finds that composition textbooks “obscure the emotional dimensions of writing” (41), and although several texts prove an exception, “the dominant impression after such a survey is that appeals to emotion are understood to be a kind of compromise for the postlapsarian world, infinitely dangerous and detached from rational processes” (38).

Within Moon’s myriad critiques I see three categories at work: how emotion is discussed explicitly, how it is framed implicitly, and what remains absent from either of those realms. Within the first category, Moon’s analysis demonstrates that readers of textbook pathos are all but guaranteed to encounter two things: (1) reference to Aristotle’s *pisteis* and (2) a warning. She notes that despite the frequent invocation of Aristotle and any boost in ethos gained by referencing classical rhetorical theory or Greek antiquity, “the textbooks’ rhetoric is not an Aristotelian rhetoric” (39), for reasons that I elaborate at the end of this section. After defining pathos in relation to emotion and situating it among *logos* and *ethos*, the majority of texts urge caution in varying degrees, though a few maintain outright interdiction: “Appeal to principles, reason, and common sense, not to emotions, ignorance, and prejudices” (qtd. in Moon, 35). Warnings range from passive to prescriptive, and appear regardless of whether the valence attached to pathos is positive, neutral, or negative.

Moon’s analysis also notes an abundance of implicit warnings regarding pathos, often gestured to through the choice of example. For instance, whereas one text explicitly “assert[s] the validity of both values and emotions,” it nevertheless “exemplifies, illustrates, and analyzes only offenses of crude emotionalism” (36). Many of the textbooks look only to advertising and politics for examples of pathos; when juxtaposed to examples of *logos* culled from literature and law, pathos is implicitly framed as persuasive lubricant for messages of questionable integrity. Moon recognizes, however, that the cultural assumptions undergirding *logos* and pathos are born of “western culture’s binary habits” (39), in which reason and emotion are placed in opposition, not just in their characteristics, but also in their social value. These epistemic assumptions are so entrenched that even when textbooks contend that effective argumentation cannot occur without a combination of *logos* and pathos, the result is little more than a drama in which “reason is a strong protagonist who needs a sidekick, a supporting actor, in emotion” (36).

Where Moon’s essay makes the most powerful contributions, I would argue, is in diagnosing what is absent from accounts of textbook pathos—absences that stand apart from those of texts that “say nothing at all about pathos—or about emotions, feelings, prejudices, and the like” (33). Most of the textbooks she reviewed decline to comment, for example, on the interconnectedness of pathos, *ethos*, and *logos*. Though the majority of them do acknowledge that a *combination* of all three is needed to effectively persuade, appeals are still treated as separate and sovereign entities. In these cases, the proposed formula for persuasion is one of addition (*logos* + *ethos* + pathos), whose tidiness deters inquiry into how appeals interact with one another and how their effects can multiply as a result. Treating appeals as distinct entities is frequently reinforced through the use of examples, which point out how one sentence appeals to *ethos* while another appeals to pathos, suggesting that the grammatical period is an appeal’s natural boundary marker. Although none of these traits on their own necessarily undermines a more accurate and agile conception of the three appeals, it is the chronic silence that surrounds how the modes of persuasion are inextricably bound up with one another, how they animate and support each other in dynamic interplay, and how a single sentence can contain layers of all three appeals simultaneously. What’s often missing from discussions of the

appeals, in other words, is precisely what makes them both effective and fascinating—their interconnectedness.

Moon furthermore points out that pathos gets consistently confined to intentional, dialectical argumentation. Outside that realm, emotions are *in absentia*. “They are not discussed explicitly as part of the scene of writing—as forces motivating the writer to write or inhibiting the writer from writing,” she contends, “nor even as legitimate players in the response writers have to their own reasoning as they use writing for discovery, clarification, learning, communication, expression, aesthetic creation, or recreation” (38). Also missing is any engagement with different theories of emotion, whether evolutionary, cognitivist, or sociocultural, though Moon does concede that given how disparate discourses on emotion are—in both approach and disciplinary location—perhaps textbook authors have chosen the wiser path in abstaining.

Given the containment of pathos to argumentative appeal—and the lack of any supplemental theoretical perspectives that may call that containment into question—it is unsurprising that Moon also notes almost zero mention of emotions’ relationship with or role in “other intellectual processes,” nor any accounts of “the implication of emotions in history, language, culture” (40). Of those intellectual processes, she draws particular focus to the formation of political judgments and the realm of ethics, which, absent any explicit connection, remain implicitly separate from the workings of pathos. I believe this is one shortcoming that could be resolved with minimal intervention, for the simple reason that textbooks almost invariably refer to Aristotle as a principal source of knowledge on pathos, and his very definition of emotion is centered quite clearly on judgment: “The emotions [*pathē*] are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments ... for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites” (1378a 20-23).^[2]

The list of examples that conclude Aristotle’s definition, as well as his extensive analysis of specific emotions that immediately follows, reveals by contrast another critical absence. Moon attests, “None of the textbooks I reviewed for this study engaged an analysis of the *pathē*—and certainly not of any particular emotion—as central to writing [and] to rhetoric” (40). This absence is especially important to note, as it demonstrates the considerable degree of disconnect between Aristotle’s framework for understanding pathos and the versions of textbook pathos that are promoted under the banner of his name. Aristotle states quite plainly that any understanding of pathos is the result of studying specific emotions—“that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited” (1356a 23-25). The message is emphasized through his practice, too, in that the bulk of Book II of the *Rhetoric* is dedicated to detailed exploration of specific emotions.^[3] Moon’s testimony to the absence of anything remotely resembling such study in the textbooks she reviews is a compelling example of how the concept of pathos—rich and provocative and ripe with persuasive potential—has been emptied of the specificities that animate it, starved of its spirit, resulting in a version distributed to students that is, in her words, “faint and attenuated” (33).

The Ascendance of Affect

For those who find pathos to be an integral element of effective rhetoric—and therefore also integral to the teaching of writing—and who believe that the emotional and affective forces that flow throughout our everyday lives are worthy of sincere contemplation, “The Pathos of *Pathos*” paints a bleak landscape. Moon ultimately determines that the treatment of emotion in (formerly) contemporary composition textbooks “is a treatment inadequate to Composition” (33). Since the essay’s publication in 2003, however, the topic of affect and emotion has garnered considerable attention. Questions about affect and emotion are being pursued in fields spanning the academy, from neuroscience to architecture to business and including, of course, rhetoric and composition studies. We have witnessed in the past several years a salvo of publications with affect and emotion in their titles and abstracts, as well as increased ranks of those who seek active participation in the conversation and its further development—a momentum that has yet to show any signs of abatement.

Indeed, in autumn of 2015 the first conference dedicated entirely to affect theory took place, gathering together a wide range of academics, artists, entrepreneurs, activists, and theorists, including Lauren Berlant, Melissa Gregg, Brian Massumi, Kathleen Stewart, and Patricia Clough, to name a few. “Not without some amount of controversy and pushback,” the conference description reads, “the relatively rapid movement of affect toward the forefront of critical attention has been opening new paths of intellectual inquiry, reshuffling longstanding debates and conceptual formations, and inspiring imaginative cross-fertilizations of disciplinary and aesthetic genres. Now seems a perfect time to pause and take stock” (Seigworth). Such a conference demonstrates not just the impressive development of affect and emotion studies, but it also marks an arrival of sorts, from which one can confidently state that the research on affect and emotion is no passing trend. Even if affect theory does not retain the level of prominence to which it has steadily ascended over the course of several decades, its impact on intellectual thought is evident.

The momentum that led to this “affective turn,” as it is often labeled, has no single origin but rather a constellation of

texts and events that captured the interest of scholars, particularly those working in the humanistic fields of literature, sexuality studies, and cultural theory. “The Autonomy of Affect” by Brian Massumi and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s and Adam Frank’s essay, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold” are, however, frequently cited as catalysts of the affective turn, even as they both draw heavily upon the work of other, already well-known theorists—Gilles Deleuze and Silvan Tomkins, respectively—in framing their articulations of affect. The interest in affect and emotion that was piqued in the 1990s manifested a few years later in a torrent of seminal works unleashed at the turn of the century.

In 2001, Martha Nussbaum’s study of Aristotle, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, was published, championing a neo-Stoic approach in which emotions are considered cognitive judgments. In 2002, Brian Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* escalated the still-running debate over the autonomy of affect. In 2003, Ann Cvetkovich published *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, which approaches cultural texts as repositories of public feelings and draws links between individual experience, structures of collective emotion, and political change. The same year, Sedgwick’s collection of essays, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy*, advocated for exploring affect through non-dualistic means. A year later, in 2004, two hugely influential books were published that countered the post-Romantic, essentialized view of emotion as a psychological byproduct rooted in the individual body and promoted instead a conception of emotion that is shaped by social and historical forces. Lauren Berlant’s *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* and Sara Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* both provide powerful, historically situated accounts of what Ahmed calls “the very public nature of emotion, and the emotive nature of publics” (14). That same year saw a spate of books released that approached affect and emotion with wide-ranging methodologies put to myriad purposes: Teresa Brennan’s *The Transmission of Affect*; Antonio Damasio’s *Looking for Spinoza*; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*; and Jacques Ranciere’s *The Politics of Aesthetics: the Distribution of the Sensible*. The momentum these texts generated helped contribute to scholarly activity across academe, from cultural anthropology to biology to history.^[4]

Within rhetoric and composition studies, the influence of affect theory has invigorated multiple research agendas and revitalized investigations into pathos. Evidence of this influence can be observed in several key publications that have reciprocally spurred research in affect theory. The publication of *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies* connects issues of affect to a wide range of pedagogical and administrative matters, work that is developed further in Laura Micciche’s *Doing Emotion*, published several years later. Affect theory informs Jenny Rice’s notion of rhetorical ecologies, which offers productive revision to the concept of the rhetorical situation. In her essay, “The New ‘New’: Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies,” Rice notes that theories of affect have significant value for investigating civic discourse and public affect as well as other lines of research, such as “a more complex understanding of *pathos* (beyond emotion), increased attention to the physiological character of rhetoric, and a rethinking of ideological critique” (211). Each of the categories Rice mentions have indeed seen vigorous debate and fresh insights, evinced by a series of compelling publications: Sharon Crowley’s *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Daniel Gross’s *The Secret History of Emotion*, Diane Davis’s *Inessential Solidarity*, Thomas Rickert’s *Ambient Rhetoric*, Rice’s own *Distant Publics*, and the recent issue of *Quarterly Journal of Speech* focused on “Rhetoric’s Sensorium.” This special issue of *Composition Forum* is itself a testament to the fresh energy surrounding research in affect and emotion in composition studies; simultaneously, this issue—published twenty years after Lynn Worsham’s “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion”—exemplifies the enduring interest in and commitment to issues of emotion and composition.

The Treatment of Emotion in Current Composition Textbooks

To what extent and in what ways then, have research developments in affect and emotion studies over the past fifteen years manifested themselves in contemporary composition textbooks? Following the lead of Donald Stewart and Gretchen Flesher Moon, I assembled twenty-five leading textbooks from a variety of publishers, each book published after 2010 either new or as a revised edition. Seven of the twenty-five are new editions of textbooks included in Moon’s review. Of these seven, all but one mentions the appeals in some fashion (See Appendix, Source 18).^[5] Similar to Moon’s methodology, I analyze the texts’ treatment of pathos, attending to explicit definitions and discussions as well as to their implicit framing. Although any positioning of pathos is always already a form of theorization, albeit implied, explicit engagement with critical theories of emotion remains a rarity.

Of the twenty-five books that Moon included in her study, five made “no reference to emotions, feelings, or *pathos*” (35). Two out of these five works are no longer in production; of the remaining three with new editions, two of them still refrain from using the term “pathos,” though both now have mentions of emotion and feelings (Appendix, Sources 10 and 22). However, for one text this mention was a revision to the “Classical Fallacies” section, which now includes “appeal to emotion” as an example (Appendix, Source 22). The last of the five now includes a definition of and multiple references to pathos, albeit brief (Appendix, Source 23). In updating Moon’s category of textbooks that

showed a complete absence of reference to pathos or emotion, then, these revisions do suggest progress however piddling.

One pattern that remains remarkably consistent is the warning. The means by which caution is invoked are varied, running the gamut from overt prohibition of pathos in favor of logos—"Avoid using arguments that rely only on wrenching the reader's heart rather than logic and real evidence" (Appendix, Source 12, p. 91)—to encouraging attentiveness to the expectations of the genre or rhetorical situation—"Emotional appeals should be used carefully in academic writing, where arguments are often expected to emphasize logical reasons and evidence more than emotion" (Appendix, Source 7, Glossary/Index, emotional appeal).^[6] Many texts call attention to the power of pathos as a way to urge caution—"All [appeals to pathos] are volatile, however, and should be handled with care" (Appendix, Source 5, p. 197)—and often point out that this power can swing both ways—"[because] emotional appeals can be so powerful, they carry risk as well as potential reward" (Appendix, Source 25, p. 333). The majority of texts employ warnings that echo Aristotle, in a sense, advocating for the *meso-path*, the middle way between extremes. Include an appeal to emotion, these warnings suggest, but to an appropriate degree and in balance with your other appeals—not too little, not too much, just enough.

When this approach is amplified, however, it tends to frame appeals to pathos as a high-stakes gamble: "When pathos appeals succeed, they are extremely effective; when they fail they are often an embarrassment to their author" (Appendix, Source 5, p. 197). In some cases, the extremes may only be negative, implying that engaging pathos may be a zero-sum game: "Some writers are often reluctant to use emotion, or pathos, in their papers, feeling that to do so is being manipulative or unethical. Other writers use too much emotion, at the cost of providing too little logical support. Aim for a balance even as you purposely evoke your audience's emotions" (Appendix, Source 20, p. 287). Presenting such extremes, however, promotes trepidation instead of inquiry, and tends to obscure the moderate path the texts are attempting to encourage. Accumulated references to "manipulation" and frequent use of the adjective "unethical" prefigure students into positions of predator or prey—"Will my audience respond to emotional appeals or will I seem manipulative if I appeal to pathos?" (Appendix, Source 6, p. 211)—and inflect overtones of suspicion and anxiety into discussions of pathos where there should be curiosity and wonderment instead.

Instances of amplification undermining instruction often occurs in a textbook's choice of example when illustrating the use of pathos. Texts tend to deploy examples of fear and pity.^[7] For example, "You may remember the pathos appeal contained in the magazine advertisement that showed a wide-eyed and bedraggled child with a caption reading, 'You can help her or you can turn the page.' We speak of these appeals as pathos appeals" (Appendix, Source 5, p. 197). Although I firmly believe the forces of pity and fear are deserving of analysis and exploration, I also contend that they are overrepresented as examples of emotion. The risk here is equating pity with pathos and in the process eclipsing the extraordinary range of human emotional experience available for exploration.

My analysis of warnings establishes—unfortunately—that composition textbooks are directing students to be *wary* of appeals to emotion, rather than to be *mindful* of them. An example of the latter approach can be found in the *Atlas of Emotions*, an interactive website project created in collaboration between the Dalai Lama and psychologist Paul Ekman.^[8] Of the project, the Dalai Lama said, "This [emotional] innerness, people should pay more attention to, from kindergarten level up to university level. This is not just for knowledge, but in order to create a happy human being" (Randall). Using the *Atlas of Emotion* in class to complement a textbook reading could be one way for instructors to encourage observation and exploration of emotion, though I hasten to add that there are textbooks that can serve as models for encouraging rhetorical sensitivity in place of apprehensiveness. For example, one text tells students "it's a good idea to spend some time early in your work thinking about how you want readers to feel as they consider your persuasive claims" (Appendix, Source 14, p. 40). The recommendation to reflect early on in the composing process promotes a mindful approach to pathos and will likely lead to greater understanding for students and instructors alike, at least more so than an approach characterized by skepticism and trepidation.

Although the penchant for warnings continues, my analysis suggests an increased recognition by textbook authors of how the appeals are fundamentally interconnected rather than discrete units of persuasion. In her essay, Moon spotlights two textbooks as anomalistic because they articulate pathos in more relational, dynamic, and expansive ways; both of these texts remain in print and still show a high degree of sensitivity to the interconnectedness of pathos—not only to the other appeals, but to other areas of the writing process and to everyday life more generally (Appendix, Sources 9 and 21). Similar stances can be found in several other texts, each drawing attention to the interrelation of logos, ethos, and pathos (Appendix, Sources 1, 4, 8, 11, 13, 19, 24, and 25). For example, one text casually counters the culturally prevalent notion that emotion and logic are separate and antithetical systems by simply saying, "No argument is completely devoid of emotional appeal, but some arguments rely on emotions more than others do" (Appendix, Source 25, p. 333). A few pages later in a section on logical appeals, the text underscores the point: "Of course, reason can never be completely separate from emotion" (Appendix, Source 25, p. 335). This is

a welcome shift from the trend identified by Moon and a marked contribution to the developing through-line of emotion's treatment.

In continuing to trace a through-line from Moon to our current moment, however, there are notable areas in which textbooks have yet to make sustained progress. Attention to the specificities and diversity of emotional experience has yet to occur in any appreciable degree. Although many texts do name specific emotions—fear, anger, sadness, pity, happiness, and love being the most common, in order of frequency—that list is slim when compared to the array of emotions we routinely experience. Guilt, for example, is mentioned only sporadically in the several thousand pages reviewed for this essay, yet it is an emotion that figures prominently in numerous critical and rhetorical theories, most notably those of Kenneth Burke.

Of course, guilt is just one of the many powerful forces that regularly influences our actions on both individual and collective levels. Although a simple list of emotions would be a step in the right direction, if only to spark curiosity, it would ideally lead into or otherwise complement a sustained analysis of a specific emotion. This should, in turn, compel inclusion of some theories of emotion to not just help illuminate aspects of that emotion's persuasive implications but also to pique interest and demonstrate the complexity of emotions. As it stands, however, we still have a treatment of pathos that is inadequate for composition studies. "Textbook pathos," as a descriptive phrase, denotes a shallow version of pathos, one equated with a generic conception of emotion uninformed by the wealth of critical theories at our disposal.

There is one important exception: one textbook incorporates theories of emotion from an assortment of disciplines, references numerous emotions, and explores specific ones in depth in both critically nuanced and accessible language. *Rhetorical Analysis: A Brief Guide for Writers* discusses the appeals in a traditional manner similar to other textbooks but is distinguished from others by its attention to detail. For example, in its initial definition, the concept of pathos is described as a two-step process: "Typically, the speaker must first present *causes for emotion* ... to arouse, intensify, or change the audience's emotion. Then the emotion functions as a reason for embracing an idea or taking action" (Appendix, Source 13, p. 46). This refinement is admirable not only for its clarity and concision but also for its practical value, which simultaneously directs students to what to look for and equips them with language for communicating what is discovered.

The text's most impressive innovation, however, comes in a separate chapter later in the book, titled "Affect (Pathos Revisited)." The chapter engages an impressive mix of theories, thinkers, concepts, examples, and emotions, all in pursuit of precisely what Moon found to be entirely absent: "an analysis of *pathē* ... central to writing [and] rhetoric" (Moon 40). The textbook notes at the beginning that "Rhetoricians have been theorizing emotion and human motivation since the ancient Greeks," marking the study of pathos as principal to the study of rhetoric. It is quickly indicated, however, that the study of both is ongoing—and quite active at that:

During the last 30 years or so, developments in social psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, and philosophy have asked many people outside rhetorical theory to consider emotion. Some have become especially interested in the social function of bodily conditions (what we will call *affects*). (Appendix, Source 13, p. 208)

The chapter then weaves in many of the topics that have animated (and continue to animate) key debates in affect theory, such as the relationship between sensory input and cognitive decisions as well as the relationships among affect, emotion, and behavior.

The textbook engages each of the three areas of affect theory that have gained notable traction in rhetoric and composition scholarship—the ideological, physiological, and social. For example, in exploring anger, the textbook introduces the notion of emotion as socially and historically contingent:

While anger may be universal, our thoughts about and manners of expressing anger differ across cultures. The ancient Greeks thought anger was a positive experience that should be relished ... Twenty-first-century Americans, on the other hand, think of anger as a destructive emotion, something to be suppressed, not enjoyed. (Appendix, Source 13, p. 224)

The textbook contains elements connected to each of Moon's critiques: it engages multiple theories of emotion; shows the consequences of emotion for history, language, and culture; and interrogates, rather than reinforces, binaries between reason and emotion, mind and body. And it does so on a foundation of classical rhetorical thought that is informed by insights from contemporary theory.

This book is anomalous in its treatment of pathos, as it is in its coverage of other key areas of rhetorical theory. The depth and rigor it offers for introducing rhetoric likely make it better suited for higher-level writing courses at many

institutions. In this way, it is distinct from several of the other textbooks reviewed here, which have clearly targeted the first-year composition course. I highlight this particular text, then, as an example of and inspiration for how pathos might be rethought for composition instruction. It represents an important evolution for considering the through-line of emotion's treatment in composition textbooks, signaling further change is on the horizon, should we be willing to enact it.

Paths Forward for Pathos

In lieu of a conclusion that connotes an ending, I wish to provide a brief set of reflections oriented toward future development. As we consider possible paths forward in how pathos is communicated in our textbooks, classrooms, and mentorships, I submit the following three recommendations for deliberation:

1. Define emotion.

There is a definitional haziness across our textbooks that inhibits student engagement and understanding. All of the textbooks that define pathos do so with the word "emotion." Yet next to none then go on to define emotion, suggesting that the term enjoys a stability and clarity in what it refers to, which it simply does not. To be sure, even if textbooks include superb definitions of emotion, we will still not reach complete consensus nor is that the point. Our goal is to help lead students into the concepts central to our discipline. Taking steps to define our key terms is just one way to make those concepts more accessible and engaging. For what it's worth, I find Lynn Worsham's definition to be one of the most compelling: "a tight braid of affect and judgment, socially constructed and lived bodily, through which the symbolic takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the social order and its structure of meaning" (216).

Ideally, defining emotion to better explain pathos would in turn trigger attention to how we define pathos implicitly. In the textbooks reviewed, pathos is variously configured as a tool (one uses pathos), a method (one appeals to pathos), and an objective (to generate pathos). Without additional efforts to clarify our concepts, we should not be surprised when students struggle to engage with them to the degree or in the manner we desire.

2. Specify emotions.

We—textbook users and creators—may take a cue from the *Rhetoric* on the value of specifying emotions when discussing pathos. Aristotle's framing of pathos consists of just a couple of pages—literally, two—before he moves to discuss specific emotions and their conceptual pairings, all in great detail. This is a stark contrast to the dearth of specific emotions mentioned in contemporary textbooks, let alone examined in depth. My recommendation, however, is not aimed at simply mirroring Aristotle; after all, the *Rhetoric* was composed under vastly different circumstances, for different purposes, and for a decidedly different audience. Rather, my point is this: If we see fit to continually reference Aristotle as the principal source for understanding the appeals and particularly pathos, we may benefit from considering why the *Rhetoric* is tipped heavily toward analysis of specific emotions, their characteristics, what often propels them into existence, their relation to other emotions, etc.

One need not spill three times as much ink on fear and calmness as they do on an overview of pathos (as Aristotle does) in specifying emotion. Even reading a list of emotions can provoke reflection, stoke interest, and prompt conversation. Go ahead and reflect on a time when you were amused, exhilarated, humbled, surprised, stumped, incensed, tickled, relaxed, inspired, insulted, vulnerable, withdrawn, playful, motivated, assured, eager, indignant, uptight, restless, brave, blessed, animated, curious—you get the idea. Specifying emotion is a way to demonstrate to students the staggering number of terms they know for the varieties of emotional experience. The goal is the same as with the first suggestion: help students to understand, appreciate, and be empowered by the concepts that are central to our discipline.

3. Replace warnings and limits with complexity and curiosity.

The ratio of caution to encouragement with regard to pathos is wildly out of balance in our contemporary rhetoric and composition textbooks. Although tracing a through-line of emotion's treatment in composition textbooks revealed some surprisingly ungenerous and impudent orientations toward emotional appeals, I am confident that the tide is turning in the other direction, thanks to efforts by an increasing number of savvy teachers, enterprising textbook authors, and industrious scholars who affirm the value of pathos and demonstrate the insight that can be gained through its exploration. As a field, we would do well to invite analytical exploration of emotion where admonishment currently exists. The move to curiosity might be supplemented with acknowledgment of emotion's complexity and, in the same way, treatment of that complexity as a site for shared exploration. Of all the three recommendations offered, I believe enacting this one is most important for developing a textbook pathos that attunes students to the full

range of rhetorical dimensions and intensities.

Appendix: Source Textbooks

1. Alexander, Jonathan, and Elizabeth Losh. *Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013. Print.
2. Axelrod, Rise. *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*. 10th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013. Print.
3. Barnet, Sylvan, and Hugo Bedau. *Contemporary and Classic Arguments: A Portable Anthology*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2013. Print.
4. Bean, John, Virginia Chappell, and Alice Gillam. *Reading Rhetorically*. 4th ed. Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2014. Print.
5. Bradbury, Nancy Mason, and Arthur Quinn. *Audiences and Intentions: A Book of Arguments*. 3rd ed. Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2012. Print.
6. Braziller, Amy, and Elizabeth Kleinfeld. *The Bedford Book of Genres: A Guide and Reader*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. Print.
7. Bullock, Richard, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Francine Weinberg. *The Norton Field Guide to Writing*. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 2013. Print.
8. Dobrin, Sidney. *Writing Situations*. Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2015. Print.
9. Ede, Lisa. *The Academic Writer: A Brief Guide*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. Print.
10. Fawcett, Susan. *Evergreen: A Guide to Writing with Readings*. Boston: Cengage, 2014. Print.
11. Glenn, Cheryl. *The Harbrace Guide to Writing*. 2nd ed. Boston: Cengage, 2012. Print.
12. Goshgarian, Gary, and Kathleen Krueger. *Argument as Dialogue: A Concise Guide*. Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2011. Print.
13. Longaker, Mark, and Jeffrey Walker. *Rhetorical Analysis: A Brief Guide for Writers*. Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2010. Print.
14. Lunsford, Andrea, John Ruskiewicz, and Keith Walters. *Everything's an Argument*. 6th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2013. Print.
15. Lunsford, Andrea, Beverly Moss, Lisa Ede, Keith Walters, and Carole Clark Papper. *Everyone's an Author*. New York: Norton, 2012. Print.
16. Mauk, John, and John Metz. *Inventing Arguments*. 3rd ed. Boston: Cengage, 2013. Print.
17. Mauk, John, and John Metz. *The Composition of Everyday Life: A Guide to Writing*. 4th ed. Boston: Cengage, 2012. Print.
18. Miller, Richard, and Ann Jurecic. *Habits of the Creative Mind*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015. Print.
19. Palmquist, Mike. *Joining the Conversation: Writing in College and Beyond*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. Print.
20. Phillips, Harry, and Patricia Bostian. *The Purposeful Argument: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Boston: Cengage, 2014. Print.
21. Ramage, John, John Bean, and June Johnson. *Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings*. 9th ed. Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2012. Print.
22. Rawlins, Jack, and Stephen Metzger. *The Writer's Way*. 9th ed. Boston: Cengage, 2015. Print.
23. Rosenwasser, David, and Jill Stephens. *Writing Analytically*. 7th ed. Boston: Cengage, 2015. Print.

24. Wardle, Elizabeth, and Doug Downs. *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*. 2nd ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. Print.
25. Yagelski, Robert P. *Writing: Ten Core Concepts*. Boston: Cengage, 2015. Print.

Notes

1. Connors paints a scenario in which the textbook industry is founded almost entirely as the result of ill-equipped instructors. In 1815 there was a substantial shortage of qualified college-level instructors, he notes, “Thus were rhetoric textbooks born: out of a paucity of new rhetorical material, out of the weakness and ignorance of undertrained teachers, and out of the increasing power of a newly technologized publishing industry that was quickly gaining the ability to control the content of textbooks by the exertion of market pressure” (183). It should be made clear that contemporary textbooks materialize out of a complex of reasons, including some that contradict Connors. Although textbooks are still published for undertrained teachers out of a motive for profit, they are also published for trained teachers out of a motive for improved literacy and critical thinking. Thus are rhetoric textbooks born: out of an over-determined assemblage of motivations and situational exigencies. ([Return to text.](#))
2. Close readers of Aristotle will note that the portion excluded from his definition is a well-debated one: “and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure.” Its omission is based on two factors: (1) it is extraneous to the primary point I wish to make regarding judgment; and (2) I find convincing Dorothea Frede’s argument that Aristotle discards this element, which resonates with Plato’s influence, as he evolves his conception of emotion and ethics. Aristotle’s later description of emotion in the *Nichomachean Ethics* is distinct from what is indicated by the “pain and pleasure” dichotomy presented in the *Rhetoric*; it is not the most accurate representation of his views on emotion and therefore warrants elision. ([Return to text.](#))
3. I wish neither to imply here that Aristotle’s definition of or framework for pathos is the “correct” version nor to suggest that textbooks are to be ultimately evaluated on their fidelity to his *Rhetoric*. My intention, rather, is to point out that in those cases where Aristotle is cited in reference to pathos and employed to shoulder the load of its definition and explanation, textbook authors might consider how the *Rhetoric* structures its discussion of pathos—most notably, its ratio between overarching, abstract claims about emotions and examination of specific emotional states. ([Return to text.](#))
4. See Martin, “The Potentiality of Ethnography and the Limits of Affect Theory”; Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*; and Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, as examples from cultural anthropology, biology, and history, respectively. ([Return to text.](#))
5. In referencing the textbooks, I have chosen to include them in an Appendix and cite them as “Source XX” instead of using their title. There are a few reasons for doing so. First, this is the style that Moon worked with and given that my article draws methodological inspiration from her essay in many ways (in the selection of textbooks, categories of analysis, etc.), I find it appropriate to replicate her citation method. Second, using the generic “source” encourages readers to see the textbooks as representative of various positions, helping prevent any tendency to isolate patterns rife in the field’s thinking to a particular textbook. That is, I think that using “source” contributes to a fairer reading. Third, my choice is also driven by aesthetic reasons. Using “source” cuts down on the visual distraction, which would be significant if unique titles were listed, especially in instances where multiple textbooks are cited. ([Return to text.](#))
6. Some warnings are difficult to plot on this spectrum, such as this example: “Using emotional appeals to frame an argument—that is, to help readers view an issue in a particular way—is a tried-and-true strategy. But use it carefully, if you use it all” (Appendix, Source 18, p. 415). The text is essentially saying that emotional appeals have long proven to be effective, so if you can, avoid them entirely. ([Return to text.](#))
7. Fear and pity are so frequently archetypes of pathos that they are often targets for parody. One textbook example unknowingly (and bizarrely) reveals the confused affective entanglements of pity and irreverence. The following excerpt is an attempt to illustrate how pathos may be effectively employed:
In our cell phone example, we could use a story of people stranded on the side of the road who used their cell phones to obtain help for their 90-year-old grandmother who was having a heart attack: see how this works?” (Appendix, Source 19)

The hypothetical narrative increasingly inflates so that the end result is actually a mocking of pity. There is no

evidence in the surrounding text to suggest that this is intended as a joke, as if to wink to the student readers and implicitly say, “we know appeals to pity have been so heavily trafficked in textbooks that they can barely be taken seriously anymore.” In fact, the following lines only further heighten the impression of accidental irony: “Be careful, though. A story that sounds unconvincing or seems manipulative may backfire. A judicious use of all three types of support will produce the most convincing argument.” As much I want this particular example to illustrate an effective use of irony for teaching pathos—a strategy designed to show hyperbolized and ineffectual examples of appeals to pathos so that students will recognize the rhetorical misstep, internalize the subtle lesson that overblown and insincere appeals to pathos are ineffective, and in turn apply that insight to their future writings and rhetorical choices—I believe it unfortunately represents other things, chief among them an inadvertent disclosure of the textbook’s dismissive account of pathos. ([Return to text.](#))

8. <http://atlasofemotions.com/>. ([Return to text.](#))

Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. 2nd ed. Trans. and Ed. George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004. Print.
- Connors, Robert J. “Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline.” *College Composition and Communication* 37.2 (1986): 178-194. Print.
- Crowley, Sharon. *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. Print.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.
- Damasio, Antonio. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2003. Print.
- Davis, Diane. *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. Print.
- Frede, Dorothea. 1994. “Mixed Feelings in Aristotle’s Rhetoric,” *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric*. Ed. Amélie Rorty. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. 258-285. Print.
- Gross, Daniel. *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle’s Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Print.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin, 2004. Print.
- Hawhee, Debra. “Rhetoric’s Sensorium.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101.1 (2015): 2-17. Print.
- Jacobs, Dale, and Laura R. Micciche, eds. *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2003. Print.
- Martin, Emily. “The Potentiality of Ethnography and the Limits of Affect Theory.” *Current Anthropology* 54 (2013): 149-158. Print.
- Massumi, Brian. “The Autonomy of Affect.” *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): 83-109. Print.
- . *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.
- Micciche, Laura R. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2007. Print.
- Moon, Gretchen Flesher. “The Pathos of Pathos: The Treatment of Emotion in Contemporary Composition

Textbooks." *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies*. Eds. Dale Jacobs and Laura R. Micciche. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2003. 33-42. Print.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.

Plamper, Jan. *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*. Trans. Keith Tribe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. New York: Continuum, 2004. Print.

Randall, Kevin. "Inner Peace? The Dalai Lama Made a Website for That." *The New York Times*. 6 May 2016. Web. 20 May 2016.

Rice, Jenny. *Distant Publics: Development Rhetoric and the Subject of Crisis*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012. Print.

---. "The New 'New': Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94.2 (2008): 200-212. Print.

Schaefer, Donovan. *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve, and Adam Frank. "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins." *Critical Inquiry* 21.2 (1995): 496-522. Web. 3 Jan. 2016.

Seigworth, Gregory et al. Home Page. Affect Theory Conference: Worldings/Tensions/Futures. *Affecttheorymu.com*. October 2015. Web. 5 Jan. 2016.

Stanislavski, Constantin. *Building A Character*. Trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Stewart, Donald. "Composition Textbooks and the Assault on Tradition." *College Composition and Communication* 29.2 (1978): 171-176. Web. 5 Jan. 2016.

Welch, Kathleen E. "Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production: The Place of Theory in Writing Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication* 38.3 (1987): 269-282. Web. 5 Jan. 2016.

Worsham, Lynn. "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion." *Journal of Advanced Composition-JAC* 18.2 (1998): 213-245. Print.

"Textbook Pathos" from *Composition Forum* 34 (Summer 2016)

© Copyright 2016 Tim Jensen.

Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License](#).



Return to [Composition Forum 34 table of contents](#).