*"Make me a grocery store."* Teaching is about pushing past the boundaries of comfort zones—my students' comfort zones, yes, but also my own. I hold my breath, knowing this could be the moment when twenty undergraduates collectively decide that they are no longer going to participate in my activity. As a rhetoric instructor now teaching students in an introductory performance studies class that was, for most of them, a mandatory step to a degree in the Department of Communication, I pushed all of us a little further each time we pushed back the desks and worked through material in an embodied way.

*They are making me a grocery store.* My students are pushing carts up and down aisles, selecting products, navigating around each other, heading to the cash register. We freeze the scene, and I ask each in turn what they are doing or buying. Many are making fairly conventional purchases; a woman who has always added a fearless levity to our classroom is determinedly stockpiling dozens of the same item from the dairy section. She pauses long enough to tell us what she is buying but offers no further explanation.

The day my students made me a grocery store began a unit on the imbrication of performance in the concepts of space and place—what it means to make meaning in and of a physical location. My students fashioned a number of quick scenes before we began our theoretical work: we had a gym, a party, and a library in the middle of the classroom. I concluded the exercise by asking them, finally, to *make me a classroom.* I assumed they would take their seats, retrieving their chairs from the edges of the performance space to tighten up our discussion circle. Instead, they broke the circle and sat themselves in rows, all facing the front of the room.

*They have made me a classroom, but not this classroom*. That my students defaulted to rows, leaving space for the instructor at the front of the room, is not surprising. The performance classroom was as much a space of unlearning as it was of learning, of working up the courage to move out of rows and into a circle and to leave the desks behind altogether when the occasion called for it. In this space, I asked students to trust the body's ability to lead us into and out of theory, weaving Judith Butler and Louis Althusser and Doreen Massey through re-staged scenes of everyday life, from grocery stores to "doing" gender. In this classroom that did not look like the classrooms my students were used to, I was also painfully conscious of myself as becoming a new kind of instructor, of learning how to teach—again, differently—after having taught more traditionally framed freshman composition, rhetoric, and public speaking courses.

This personal *becoming,* my development as an instructor, was a relational project, performed in conjunction with my students. For example, I hoped to foster a great deal of discussion in this class, to encourage my students to engage in the work of the classroom as an important corollary to the performance work that drove the course. But early in the semester, a student pointed out (correctly) that classroom discussions of power and identity—two central course topics—frequently demanded a disproportionate amount of labor from women of color. In response, I began to circulate discussion questions via email before our classes met each week. The expectation, I told my students, was that we all come prepared to contribute to the conversation. This way, no one was forced to carry the conversation on their own, and students who needed more time to think before adding to a discussion were afforded an opportunity to prepare. I continue to use pre-circulated discussion questions, and more importantly, remain dedicated to the classroom as a space where students are not only invited but also expected to engage—be it through class discussions, activities, or small group conversations. I also remain dedicated to hearing students when they tell me something isn't working, and to introducing changes.

You can't ask students new to performance to leave the safety of their desks and make a grocery store on the first day of the semester, just as you can't expect new rhetoric students to produce thoughtful criticism on day one: these kinds of classrooms take work. I put in this work by having students discuss their expectations of themselves and their classmates early in the semester; by encouraging students to engage not only in class-wide conversations but also in small group discussions and activities; and by consistently asking students to participate in low-stakes exercises—like making a grocery store in performance studies, or sharing a brief, critical analysis of a current event in a rhetoric class (what my colleagues and I call "rhetoric in the wild" at UNC). I value students' diverse knowledges, encouraging them to make connections between their lives outside the classroom and the theoretical work of a rhetoric or performance course. Students bring with them their identities as athletes, video gamers, bar tenders, artists—and in the process, make connections between topics like embodied family histories and the lived example that for several of my students, playing football has become a site of re-membering, ritual action passed from father to son.

In my own studies of memory and practices of performative writing, I am interested less in continuity and linearity than in the radical potential of fragmentation and rupture, the possibilities for making-otherwise that exist in the changing repetitions of gestures and phrases, the (re)appearances of ghosts. I am dedicated to teaching with this same focus on the potentialities of imperfection, on the importance of learning *to think*, and to think *differently*, along with learning new conceptual material. This means that when I grade performances, I frame my critique not as "what went wrong" in a piece but instead as points to consider when crafting subsequent performances. In my rhetoric class, I have students work with a single text or object over the course of the semester, layering their critical readings in an often recursive, rarely straightforward process of learning to look, again. In my classes, I have watched students take ownership of material when they understand how each reading and assignment is adding to the argument of the course as a whole. I have been impressed by how much they retain when we walk through connections and scholarly conversations: *How does this topic relate to previous topics? What other theoretical voices do we hear echoing in this piece?*

I have found that students are willing to engage in the "messiness" of learning when it occurs within a classroom structure they come to trust—not necessarily a physical space, rows of chairs facing front—but a collaborative space that they believe is working *toward* something. For example, I work to re-frame students' anxiety over the liveness of performance into an understanding of its liberatory possibilities: it is true that you can never predict the exact constellation of performer and audience and space and temporal moment that will situate even a rehearsed piece (let alone more organic performances of everyday life)… and isn't it amazing that sometimes the performance accomplishes things that not even its creator imagined? When it doesn't, in the moments that feel like falling-short, you look toward the next piece. In critical work of all kinds, the process itself is epistemic, with each brave attempt to "make knowledge" teaching students a little more, even (especially) when things do not go as planned.

That day in the performance classroom, we explored, together, Doreen Massey's idea that space is made and re-made, and asked how our bodies are implicated in that making and making-otherwise. My students made me a grocery store, and they put their bodies on the line to perform (in) space, through practice and play into theory and back again, in a way that revealed to me the possibilities in my own teaching.