Consider this imaginary new writing teacher. She enters our graduate program and is inducted into writing pedagogy by composition specialists. She then finds this knowledge undervalued by her literature professors. Another day she is told, in contradiction, to pay some attention to some of the compositionists' knowledge by critical theory professors, who, with the feminist studies professors, bemoan the backwardness of creative writing professors, who resist critical theories—which undercut the authority of authors—and who worry that their art is being diminished by the non-humanistic empirical research of the composition professors, who themselves feel the literary establishment is despairingly elitist and old-fashioned, while, at the same time, those composition professors also seem too easily to ignore the power of products, of texts, in their eternal questing after underlying activities, writers' processes.

I know these confusions exist and misdirections take place because I myself have moved across these different strands of English studies—B.A. in literature, M.A. in creative writing, and Ph.D. in rhetoric—and because I train new writing teachers. A few years ago I began to study one group of eight teachers during their first year of teaching, choosing, on purpose, a mix of those who intended to produce, or to study the production of, texts and those who intended to consume texts: future writing and literature professors (see Bishop, "Attitudes and Expectations"). As I observed these teachers during their first year, I also discussed with them the ways they were being educated and supported in their own graduate classes. I interviewed literature gradu-
ate teaching assistants (GTAs) who didn't feel like writers; only "creative writing graduate students" enrolled in graduate writing workshops could call themselves that. I interviewed creative writing, rhetoric, and literature GTAs who found great disjunction between how they were being trained to teach writing and how their writing was treated in graduate seminars. Little or no drafting was required or encouraged as part of graduate level literature courses (see also Patricia Sullivan's study), and even creative writing workshops could prove surprisingly traditional, focused on the analysis of final drafts only. I talked to perplexed GTAs who found themselves "playing school" to an unexpected degree—trying to produce the "right" reading for a literature professor and rarely-to-never receiving sufficient insight into the politics of the profession(s) that might explain why one professor still teaches New Critical approaches while another offers deconstructive readings and another swears by New Historicism.

In this essay—from the perspective of a writing teacher educator—I locate the tensions of disciplinary turf, professional allegiances, and unexamined teaching practices that intersect in the first-year, writing-with-literature class. Within these classrooms English studies starts to get earnest about its business of sorting students for the institution, and it is here also that we begin to distinguish the literature teacher from the writing teacher. I want to share my understandings of these courses, examine confusions that surround these courses for new teachers and for English departments in general, and address the problems inscribed in the very language we use for this work (which results from historical and political developments in the field). I hope in this process to begin to clarify a very muddy situation. Finally, knowing change in this area within English departments will be difficult and slow, I still suggest changes.

What Is Writing-with-Literature?
When I observe first-semester, first-year writing sections, called Freshman Rhetoric and Composition at my university, I am comfortable as a teacher educator. These are writing workshop classes. Students and teacher together work to understand and improve each writer's process of composing written texts. With a handbook and rhetoric as textbooks and students' primarily essayistic texts as reading materials, there is rarely a confusion of purpose. 1

When I observe second-semester, first-year writing sections, called Freshman Writing About Literature at my university, I am often uncomfortable. These classes are meant to continue in the workshop model. However, with the addition of a literary reader—which traditionally consists of selections of poetry, stories, and plays (and more recently essays)—students' writing often moves from primary reading material to subservient text, students using their essays to prove knowledge of canonical literature and literary techniques. Here students' essays inhabit the classroom sidelines, always "apprentice" work, attempting but never managing to attain the
substance of the central works studied by the class (see Scholes Textual Power for an in-depth discussion of this hierarchy).

For those who devote themselves to the literature strand of English studies, this may seem a necessary and normal progression. After students study rhetoric and their own writing, they quickly move on, studying the best written texts available, literature. In this scenario, composition serves the university by delivering basic skills to a large entering freshman class, while, within the English department, first-year, writing-with-literature courses act as feeder classes that recruit for literary studies.

At many universities, the second semester class can also migrate to the sophomore year and/or become the class taught most often by literature faculty members who need to meet their composition instruction commitment. At some universities, that leaves the first semester—or writing-without-literature—course staffed exclusively by teaching assistants and adjuncts, non-empowered academics in training (or worse, non-tenure-line academics in limbo).² Peter Elbow observes:

In meetings to decide who teaches a writing course and who teaches a literature course, I often discover decisions being made on the premise that someone must be smarter to teach literature than to teach writing. Now that I'm sensitive to that premise, I see it often. Thus people often assume that only advanced and experienced graduate students should teach literature but that raw, first-year [graduate] students are ready to teach writing. (What 127)

However, the new teacher or adjunct may not be raw in relation to writing pedagogies, having often been trained (no matter how swiftly) to meet the needs of preparatory or first-year writers. But older literature faculty members, hired in the 1970s or earlier, may remain untrained—and resistant to training—in composition research, theory, and (new) practice(s). And these professors may view first-year students merely as naïve readers with abominable writing skills that need to be fixed in order to allow them to better discuss the literary texts that remain, for such professors, at the core of the writing course.

In fact, according to Wanda Martin, these faculty members often see their assignments in composition as “punishment”:

Every semester, some of these classes fail to garner the needed enrollment, and the faculty member is bumped down, down, down, into God forbid, Freshman English. Generally, professors in such situations are gracious; they put the best possible face on it and may even claim to hold no particular preference for teaching Seventeenth-Century Poetry over teaching composition. But given any choice at all, they will always seek an advanced composition course over one for freshmen, and a second semester freshman course over a first. (122-23)

Such teaching assignments are inevitable given current enrollment statistics in English departments since, at many universities, literature enrollments continue to decline and composition enrollments continue to rise.

At the same time, in the second-semester writing class, the study of reading—the complicated, interactive reception of texts—gives way to a
more narrow definition of reading. In the traditional approach to consuming texts, students are asked to read the print before them while paying little or no attention to history, criticism, and the authors' actual, possible, or probable methods of composition. As Patricia Sullivan explains, "Literary criticism is still imagined as the 'reading' an individual student produces rather than as a discourse he or she participates in" (296).

In a writing course that focuses on reading, the consumption of texts inevitably engulfs the teaching of writing and the production of texts. For instance, Maxine Hairston argues "when discussion in the class focuses on finished products rather than on how those products came into being, the writing component of the course suffers. What should be the focus of any writing course—the study of the writing process at all levels, both amateur and professional—gets lost" (180). However, even those in composition do not uniformly agree on the purpose of this course as evidenced in the Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate debate, started at a meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1992, that resulted in a sequence of essays (and readers' responses) appearing in College English during 1993 and 1995. In 1993, Lindemann argued for re-defining the first-year course as one that "offers guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions" (312); Tate felt that literature in composition courses was often mis-taught, and he advocated a literary focus to Lindeman's academic discourse focus.

Clearly, the issues involved are problematic, resulting in feelings that as a profession we're rearguing an old and, for some, a useless issue while others feel that we need to revisit the history and purposes of these courses. In a 1995 issue of College English, Erwin Steinberg, for example, argues along the lines of the Corbett quotation that opens this essay, more or less claiming that there's enough work to do in the writing classroom without adding the complications of imaginative literature. Michael Garne, on the other hand, argues for fictionalizing the curriculum. As he sees it, "imaginative texts... hold multiple points of view and are by nature multidisciplinary" (282). And he worries that "our graduate student teachers—at least those in the humanities and even in the social sciences—usually have just begun their own theoretical reading, and if anything are too eager to impart these powerful ways of seeing to their students" (283). Finally, in this same issue, Lindemann and Tate recap their positions—Lindemann arguing, again, for those in composition to define the goals of first-year writing. Tate revisits his own arguments and finds that the issue is less the disappearance of literature from the classroom than the disappearance of discussions about the place of literature in the first-year classroom: "In other words, although we might still be using literature, we weren't talking about it" (304). He argues that the current debate signals a need for such discussion. I feel the need, too, even though I realize the topic can raise a groan of "haven’t we been here before" from teachers (as it did from a reviewer of this essay). As a teacher-educator,
I find myself returning to considerations of this course again and again.

Even as I try to situate myself in the "should we, shouldn't we teach literature?" discussions, I find it more important to consider the degree to which—whenever we teach literature and writing together—we have not been integrating this instruction with teaching reading in the broadest and most useful sense. I find it problematic, that, from first-year classes through graduate classes, reception theories and skills often are not taught as much as they are assumed. In the current-traditional writing-about-literature course, novice readers may be asked to undertake increasingly more complicated "readings" of literary texts without ever having theories of reading explained very clearly or explicitly. And at the graduate level, critical theories are applied to canonical texts but not to GTAs' texts; for instance, we may punish "gaps" in graduate student text, yet praise the free-play available to us in the "gaps" of texts by famous critical theorists. And in one sense, assumptions concerning reading ability always privilege those who read best (teachers) at the expense of those who would read better (students). As Elbow explains: "The primacy of reading in the reading/writing dichotomy is an act of locating authority away from the student and keeping it entirely in the teacher or institution or great figure" ("The War" 13).

While those in composition have made strong cases for the need to teach writing processes, the case for teaching reading processes has not been as uniformly made. And the graduate student teachers who are providing the bulk of composition instruction are themselves not guided through their own graduate level reading and writing tasks in a way that allows them, later, to model or illuminate text processes. Edward P.J. Corbett testifies to large gaps in these teachers' pedagogical preparation: "Many English teachers come from the ranks of those who were omnivorous readers and, having learned to write mainly through this process of osmosis, quite naturally believe that others too can learn to write by being exposed to great literature" (170).

In addition, for graduate students in English, their own writing may go unattended. In her study of English graduate student writing at four universities, Patricia Sullivan found that "Graduate faculty tend to teach literature in the primary sense but assume that graduate students will master (or have mastered) the writing of scholarly and critical texts on their own" (296). In fact, professors in her study seemed to be so unreceptive to current thinking concerning writing instruction, they felt writing "processes cannot or ought not be taught because discussion of the writing task would mean intervening in the writing process either in superfluous or counter-productive ways" (294). The net result of such thinking moves the burden of writing and reading instruction from professors to graduate students, with pedagogical problems, according to Sullivan, being "attributed to [the] personal deficiency [of graduate students], not institutional praxis" (288).

Given the documentable lack of guidance received by graduate students when they undertake their own reading/writing assignments, it is not surpris-
ing that despite their own preparation for teaching first-year writing—GTAs sometime neglect to provide guidance to students in the area of reception, since graduate students, as I pointed out before, are generally life-long readers who have consumed text after text. And for good readers, according to Elbow, "the reading process is more hidden—and also quicker—it seems less fraught with struggle for someone who is good at it. Therefore, literature teachers often fail to experience themselves in the same boat or engaged in the same process as their weak students" (What 131). Equally these new graduate students often inherit troublesome assumptions during their coursework, such as the habit of attributing first-year writing students' writing and reading problems to personal deficiency rather than to teaching practices. That is, the way graduate students have been treated as writers conflicts with the way they are being taught to teach first-year writing. And there is the even sadder assumption that literature students and certainly those in first-year writing only serve or study creative texts; they do not create them, although many came to literature via the excitement of trying to make literature. Despite this situation, creative writing is often banned from first-year writing classes, and graduate students generally forswear their earlier pleasures in text production. As Elbow notes:

I've noticed a striking feature that is common in literature students that I don't much see in graduate students from other disciplines: a wry and sometimes witty but always condescending tone they take toward their younger selves who were usually excited with writing and eager to be great writers. Behind this urbanity I often see a good deal of disappointment and even pain at not being able to keep on writing those stories and poems that were so exciting to write. But instead of acknowledging this disappointment, these students tend to betray a frightening lack of kindness or charity—most of all a lack of understanding—toward that younger self who wanted to grow up to be Yeats or Emily Dickinson. Instead, I see either amused condescension or downright ridicule at their former idealism and visionary zeal. ("The War" 8-9).

Whether GTAs began primarily as readers, as Corbett suggests, or as writers, as Elbow claims, their teaching may suffer when they abandon their pasts. I think this lack of self-understanding about one's own literacy appears in negative ways in the writing-with-literature class where text appreciation is foregrounded; where literary text-making is often, at the same time, forbidden; where newly cynical GTAs discover that their own writing students are not motivated to write on restricted topics and in limited forms—just as these GTAs are folding away their own dreams of being writers as they write single-draft academic essays for their own professors who, long ago, folded away similar dreams. However, I do not mean to argue that every writing class should focus on creative genres, that every GTA is a bitter former-poet, or that all English professors are urbane and unapproachable, but I do argue that when such suppression occurs, we might locate its beginning in the second semester writing course. For it is here that teachers' individual histories play out against a broad sweep of field and institutional history.
For the second half of this essay, then, I want to explore the problems that develop when the literary text slips into the writing classroom, and I aim this exploration in two directions. First, I look at the confusion that arises for new teachers of writing when they enter the contradictory culture of English studies. Second, I explain this confusion by looking at the dichotomous language we use to separate production from consumption—teaching writing from teaching literature—and the way that our language reflects our institutional history and our everyday lives. Both explorations should illuminate my basic thesis: Writing-about-literature classes present new teachers with too many tacit and conflicting demands. These demands exemplify, in microcosm, the long-term and continuing conflicts that trouble English studies.

**Teachers' Confusions**

Currently, I teach two main categories of new teachers of writing: those hoping to become creative writers or rhetoricians, both focusing on the production of texts, and those hoping to become literary scholars, those focusing on the consumption of texts. To simplify, I'll refer to these groups as writing GTAs and literature GTAs.

When preparing to teach the first semester of our writing sequence, literature GTAs are worried, sometimes unhappy, although often successful; they all look forward to the second semester class which uses a readings text—predominately literary readings—although our common curriculum downplays literary value and plays up understanding of textual strategies, in part, by now requiring a reader that includes advertisements, films, imaginative nonfiction, and culture-in-general as "texts." Teaching during the second semester, the writing GTAs are the ones who are often less happy; some claim they don't know how to deal with the literature readings since they can't supply what they assume is necessary historical or critical background. Some describe being more comfortable in the previous semester with the rhetorical discussions and the focus on student texts shared in a workshop.

Now certainly there are new teachers who break through these stereotypes; literature GTAs who fall in love with teaching the writing process and find out that they too are *writers*, and writing GTAs who have always read literature and are able to make a brilliant segue to our second semester writing course, often because they have no trouble including "student-writing-as-literature" and "Literature" in the same universe. Our programmatic assumption—which broadens the category of literary (valuable) texts to include student work—does, however, give some literature GTAs great pause.

Putting aside a teacher's basic field preference, the second semester course is problematic for many. New GTAs often teach it in a traditional manner—as an introduction to literature to resistant non-majors—or they
may teach it quite loosely, as a writing course with no center, perhaps one, that just looks lightly and in an atheoretical manner at a variety of texts. There is, of course, a problem with the literature readings textbooks themselves. The textbooks are high on canonized content and low on innovative teaching apparatus; in most large programs, textbooks are pre-ordered for teachers and function to teach the teachers. Therefore, if textbooks provide current-traditional introductions, teachers receive current-traditional reinforcement. Also, the new teacher may be involved in a teacher education course that looks seriously at current theory and research in composition, advocates a process pedagogy, and provides a well-defined introductory curriculum, but time is always short in these courses and the new material—production theory—dominates while reception theory is rarely (re)visited. Generally, it is assumed that graduate students need to be trained to teach writing. And, as I have shown, it is equally easy to assume that they already know how to teach reading, having been trained to do so through their own participation in English studies as undergraduate English majors: the osmosis theory.

To further complicate the education of new teachers of college writing—and easily the majority of our new faculty members start out their academic life as graduate teaching assistants—new teachers will find that some in English studies are willing to define writing as a subject while others are very reluctant to assign content to the field. When writing is not viewed as a subject, it is also not viewed as a subject about which to talk, and there is often an unwillingness (or inability) of those in English studies to discuss the historical, political, and economic factors that have led to this development.

**Departmental Confusions**

Within my own program and despite the department's good intentions and efforts, I found at least some confirmation that English professors offer little direct instruction within the overall curriculum regarding academic publishing, tenure systems, the relationship of writing programs to literature programs, and so on. Most English departments like mine still adhere to the field coverage model of English studies (Graff, *Professing* 4-10). Field coverage tends to reduce the questions we ask about time periods, genre categories, theoretical choices, and our own ideologies by marking a professor as a specialist (within a limited area) who has no need to consult or interact with professors in other areas: Chaucer doesn’t speak to the modern British novel or American literature since 1875, and both of those areas in turn don’t speak to English literature 1500-1560, and so on. The field coverage model encourages isolation rather than conversation. As a result, programmatic meta-knowledge has been placed perhaps too conveniently into the Introduction to English Studies courses that were designed to teach bibliographic methods and now have been enlarged, slightly, to provide a whirlwind tour of
competing critical theories and, lately, a growing body of institutional history. Gerald Graff in his history reminds us that our willingness to segregate such information within a single course (rather than conduct meta-discussions within all courses) often has the (desired?) net effect of defusing ongoing self-inspection and self-critique. He points out:

The boundaries that mark literary study off from creative writing, composition, rhetoric, communications, linguistics, and film ... each bespeak a history of conflict that was critical to creating and defining these disciplines yet has never become a central part of their context of study. (Professing 258)

However, Graff’s study itself participates in such segregation in the very way he sets up his history to focus centrally on the study of literature and not at all on the study of composition. Composition scholars like Richard Miller and Susan Miller point out the ways critiques like Graff’s keep composition at the margins. Richard Miller suggests we need to readdress the work of composition by seeing it “as the institutional site reserved for investigating acts of reading and writing as evidenced in and by student texts” (169). To consider classrooms (students and teachers) as core sites for performing our academic work is to refocus Graff’s understanding of disciplinary conflicts in important ways.

While Richard Miller makes an admirable case for refocusing on the student writer, I’d also like to argue for a focus on the new teacher of student writers who hopes to become a new member of an English department somewhere. For instance, at my university, the only other regular venues for institutional instruction beyond the introductory class are informal preparations for the English job market: colloquia and individual conferences and advice offered for MLA bound job-seekers. These meetings, of course, occur after graduate students have survived many years in the confusing English studies culture; survival, in fact, that derives from the candidates’ ability to intuit the necessary tacit knowledge that will enable them to move through our complicated profession.

The lack of meta-knowledge on the part of many of our GTAs, then, predicts that they will find the second semester writing class an unsuspected scene of struggle where old and new-found allegiances are suddenly strained. After moving from first-semester teaching, the only course in the required undergraduate curriculum dedicated primarily to discussions of text production, GTAs enter a site where writing and reading vie for time and attention. And literature GTAs in particular answer the siren call of literature. Heeding the training they receive within the culture of English studies, they turn their classes from writing to reading (and a very particular and limited brand of “reading”) despite the best efforts of their rhetoric-trained composition director who tries to subvert the siren by tying teaching assistants to the masthead of a firmly outlined curriculum.
Our Language Is Our Institutional History
The language of English studies helps to compose our departmental lives, lives which in turn reflect our complicated histories. Consider the following list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Composition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Production</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Easy</td>
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<td>Old</td>
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<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meritocratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserves</td>
<td>Serves</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perpetuates</td>
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<td>Product</td>
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<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Work</td>
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<td>Heads</td>
<td>Hands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Novice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
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</table>

I suspect that the new graduate student will identify most strongly with the familiar and powerful language that resides in the left-hand column. As a new teaching assistant, however, the student's entrance to the profession takes place via the right-hand column. Overnight, what looked like the easy life of the literature professor, reading and talking about famous literary texts to classrooms of eager listeners, becomes the more frantic life of the writing teacher. And no one can quite tell the novice how to complete this understandably difficult indenture. As J. Hillis Miller explains,

> The task, most people would agree, is not to teach students in writing courses grammatical theory, but to make each student pass somehow from a condition in which he or she cannot write well to a condition in which he or she can write well. First the student cannot write well and later he or she can. To make this happen is perhaps more difficult than to make that camel pass through a needle's eye. . . . (48)

As soon as there were composition courses to teach, there was the need for this almost mystical pedagogical transformation. And the responsibility for transforming first-year students into productive university students was not taken in hand by university English professors but, rather, was placed into the hands of their graduate students and other more marginal department members. Not until the renaissance of interest in writing instruction that took place in the 1960s would the process of moving from the condition of not writing well to the condition of writing well receive adequate attention. Until that time (and even now for most writing instructors) teaching writing has been some of the most difficult work undertaken in American universities, akin to the effort needed to make many camels pass through the eyes of many needles.
In "A Personal Essay on Freshman English" Sharon Crowley argues for the abolition of the universal requirement, claiming that these courses "originated as punishment for failure to master a highly idealized version of the written dialect of the dominant class" (159) and therefore represent an institutional and political problem of gigantic proportions:

But the problems that plague Freshman English are not merely curricular. Its repetitive and repressive curriculum is directly linked to its institutional status as a required, introductory-level English course. Since it is universally required, the Freshman English course is attached to a huge administrative enterprise on almost every college campus in the country. Its very size subjects its administrators, teachers, and students to unprofessional and unethical working practices on a scale that is replicated nowhere else in the academy. . . . (157)

Required first-year writing has always required the difficult, hands-on work of despairing but aspiring young professors who now work in tandem with part-time and adjunct staffs. Required writing courses came into being at the end of the last century to solve certain institutional and professional problems which, in turn, were responsive to historical, political, and economic developments in the country as a whole; problems that continue, as Crowley (and all those who worked on the Wyoming Resolution to improve working conditions for postsecondary teachers of writing) points out.

The Dominance of the Literary Text

The study of literature has dominated English departments from the late 1890s on, and it has done so for several reasons. Before the ascent of Literature, the study of classical rhetoric contributed enormously to the four years of a gentleman's education at the undergraduate American university. But around 1880, the university—an exclusive training ground for ministers, doctors, and lawyers—transformed itself into the modern comprehensive university with graduate level programs designed along the model of German universities with their "scientific" graduate research programs. Rhetoric did not survive this transformation, in large part because, according to Robert Connors, "... there were no German Ph.Ds in rhetoric. There was, simply, no important German intellectual tradition of rhetoric active at all after around 1810, and thus there was no German field to export in the form of a Ph.D." (61). As James Berlin tells us, the movement within English departments to a focus on literary texts constitutes "a revolutionary development in language studies in the U.S. In the nineteenth-century high school and college, by contrast, the literature studied was more likely to be Roman or Greek while the focus in the study of the vernacular was rhetoric, both oral and written" (183). In addition, the study of literature would offer a chance to affirm a national culture. According to Graff, "The very decision to divide the new language and literature departments along national lines was an implicit assertion of pride in 'the English speaking race'" (Professing 71).
Also, literature offered an engaging content for study, and such texts were accessible to the philology-based German model.

Equally, the development of graduate programs continued to stratify the new university along class lines. Its proliferating programs and levels of study increased the pressures on high schools to prepare graduates for further educational advancement. Berlin points out that the development of the new university was accelerated by “the passing of the Morrill Federal Land Grant of 1862, establishing state institutions designed to apply the findings of science to the managing of economic affairs” (185) which, in turn, helped to create what Susan Miller describes as “Western expansion, post-Civil War dislocations and unease, industrialization, ‘the impact of science’” (48). Land-grant institutions also offered more educational opportunities and broadened the enrollment base of universities to include women and minorities. Consequently, between 1890 and 1920, high school and college enrollments grew rapidly.

Such stratification—graduate programs for the professional literary scholar and undergraduate programs for the mass of new college students—was supported by the implementation in 1874 of the Harvard entrance requirement. The test was a written essay evaluating a literary text. Rapidly, Harvard’s reading lists began to drive high school preparation. However, since the lists changed, it was difficult for high school teachers to decide what literary works to teach, resulting in the creation in 1894 of a uniform reading list, compiled by the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements. As English departments developed, literature became the core subject for elective undergraduate and graduate study and composition became the common basic literacy requirement for entering undergraduates. Over time, composition courses formed the financial base of the modern English Department pyramid, funding graduate students and large proportions of full-time faculty positions.

The Relationship of High and Low Work and the Results of Dominance
The English Department represents a hierarchy of workers and products. James Slevin suggests that those in literature derive power by separating texts from the taint of production, turning literary works into “timeless” objects that demand sophisticated powers of analysis and synthesis. The importance of these texts, and the value of reading them, derive precisely from their separation from history and utility, from other discursive and nondiscursive practices and cultural formations. From that ethereal perspective, they consider the work of those in the composition camp as impoverished in both its subject and the intellectual powers upon which it draws. As a result, those who do the work we generally include within the category of “composition” are seen as marginal to the real (as in “really important”) work of English departments, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Those in composition are stained by their immersion in history, by a preoccupation with social practice, and by a concern with the uses of language that refuses to privilege canonical texts and forms. (6)
Literature to a great degree still derives its power through its focus on "the text itself"—what feminist critics have often objected to as ahistorical, apolitical, "timeless" masculinist object lessons in human life. The high literary text was intentionally divorced from low popular texts, as Ann Kaplan points out, for low texts included "18th- and 19th-century popular women's magazines and novels—genres scorned by the literary male elite whose views influenced canon-formation...." (18). In this vision, politics and literature do not go together, and the life of the mind is unlike the mind preoccupied with the social practices of the home or workplace.

On the other hand, composition teachers have always known that they are in the world, a world where students from various literacies attempt to enter the democratic discussions promised, but not always delivered, by a university education. Because the timeless view of literature works to uphold a traditional canon and a traditional world-view, composition is dangerous to the degree to which those in composition use literature in a new and threatening way (just as those in critical theory do). That is, composition teachers have always known that, as John Clifford puts it, "Literature is in the world in the same way that students are in the world" (102). And teachers of college writing are preoccupied by social practice because they (and their many students) form the base of all that takes place in English studies.

Because of its ranked and tiered system of part-timers, GTAs, instructors, assistant, associate, and full professorial classes, the English department readily falls into the higher-up, lower-down way of looking at education: often assuming that those in composition are less meritorious than those in literature just as high school teachers are less able than university teachers (or why wouldn't they have chosen the more prestigious course, the left-hand column of terms that I offered earlier?). In the higher-up, lower-down scenario, gender comes strongly into play. As Lucille Schultz, Chester Laine, and Mary Savage argue:

higher-ups sustain their ability to project apparently more mundane work onto lower-downs by also projecting onto lower-downs personality characteristics which make them seem suited to this work. Lower-downs are seen as more emotional, less critical; more dependent, less capable of self-assertion; more caught up in the everyday, less theoretical; more content with their work, less capable of the more "pure" work which takes place at advanced levels; more concerned with people and nurturance, less concerned with ideas and with criticism. . . . The obverse of this tendency to project mundane work downward is the belief that knowledge should be created at advanced levels of the educational system. It is then applied or carried out at lower levels by persons whose personalities are suited to this mundane work. (148)

Women, traditionally, are assigned mundane pedagogical work. In the elementary and secondary classroom, they are valued for their ability to nurture young minds and their willingness to be guided by curricular controls. Once a work force starts to be valued for such attributes, it also becomes viewed as having those attributes. Certainly, women are viewed as being very good at lower-down work.
In a profession like composition, which is seen as lower-down work in the English department, even men who move from higher-up to lower-down suffer the taint of their descent. In moving from literary work as a Chaucer scholar to work as a composition scholar, Peter Elbow claims: "I've felt my former 'profession' treat me as less serious, intellectual, and scholarly—indeed, less a member of the profession than before" (What 127) and in discussions "between literary theory and composition theory, I've often encountered the assumption that of course all the learning will proceed in one direction" (What 127). It is no surprise that many compositionists are rebelling against the higher-up and lower-down assumptions and exploring what it means to see the field of writing instruction—positively—as a feminist enterprise that may change English studies.

In a higher-up, lower-down world, scholarship which focuses on "pedagogy"—the traditional work of lower-downs—will be dismissed. At the same time, as Richard Ohmann points out, the work of lower-downs is essential to the smooth functioning of the meritocratic society of the university:

> We have helped inculcate the discipline—punctuality, good verbal manners, submission to authority, attention to problem-solving assignments set by someone else, long hours spent in one place—necessary to perform the alienated labor that will be the lot of most. And more important still, by helping to sort out those who will succeed in school from those who will not, we have generally confirmed the class origins of our students, while making it possible for a few to rise (and others to sink). The effect—unintended of course—is to sustain the illusion of equal opportunity and convince the majority that their failure to play a significant and rewarding role in society is a personal failure rather than a systemic one. (8-9)

Ohmann's argument supports, I believe, my contention that the ways we educate our graduate students encourages them to assume that their failures in reading and writing are failures of people (they're not good critics, close readers, competent students of literature, and might just as well consider a career doing lower-down work in ESL, community college teaching, or poetry in the schools or . . . ) rather than systemic failures. In essence, by withholding English studies' meta-knowledge, we confirm the class origins of our own graduate students and encourage them to do the same with their writing students. In an apolitical, non-dialogic learning system, only those who are personally mentored by teachers and professors most like themselves will rise to the heights held by those teachers and professors.

English departments often insist that composition programs sort students for the universities—by agreeing to screen those who should progress to higher levels of education from those who are not meeting institutional or state-wide proficiency requirements—but they also sort students for themselves. According to Wanda Martin,

> No department I know of would think of instituting a common syllabus and uniform final examination for all the sections of Shakespeare, The Comedies. Yet such arrangements are routine in freshman writing programs, and they are commonly explained as quality
control measures. . . . [F]reshman writing is in general viewed by departments as a fundamentally different enterprise from the rest of the department's work: an assembly-line endeavor, essentially remedial, not especially demanding on the intellect, taught by interchangeable workers, managed by composition specialists, the segment of the regular faculty whose status is most dubious. (132)

Inculcating literacy skills and assuring future literate behavior is always the work of department lower-downs, graduate students and part-time faculty members. Only when the mass of first-year students has been essentially civilized do the senior faculty expect to meet them in upper division courses, particularly at research institutions. When students have not been judged as sufficiently groomed by literature faculty, complaints about writing and reading skills are sent down to the first-year writing program.

In this vision, the literary enterprise is steeped in self-preservation—the attempt to create a beneficial work environment for its members rather than to offer students, as is often espoused, free access to life-transforming literary texts. Literary studies avoids socioeconomic responsibilities through the tacit agreement to observe and enhance the conventions of a highly structured university social system. Literary studies has long prided itself on being ahistorical, apolitical, and set apart from the socioeconomic concerns of the nation at large. In fact, many English departments promote a very conservative view of liberal culture. To see the left-hand column of terms that I provided earlier as dominant, then, is to see English studies as the truly conservative edifice that it is, not as the liberal, transformative, humanistic discipline that it claims to be. Basically, after first-term, first-year writing fulfills its institutional function, second-term writing begins to inculcate the status quo. These classes exist as currently configured because they work—for those who are higher up.

**Responding to Institutionalized Inequity**

Literature in the writing classroom tends to overwhelm the study of writing just as the study of literature has traditionally overwhelmed creative writing and composition—the study of the production of texts—in English departments. Although literature faculty are not ogres of bad intention, they are nonetheless dominant in a social system based on inequality—both of funds and of prestige—and extreme social stratification. However, such efficient self-blinding is becoming more difficult as the numbers of writing professionals and the amount of department funds generated by writing programs increase and as cross-disciplinary study becomes more sanctioned.

When I point to writing with literature courses as sites of struggle, I am far from believing that literary texts should be abandoned entirely, particularly since I am a life-long reader of canonical and non-canonical texts. Instead, I believe these courses provide a starting place as we move in two directions. First, and most problematic, we need to be teaching writing (and advancing literacy) in all English department courses, particularly by at-
tempting to re-envision upper-level and graduate literature courses. Pedagogy needs to be part of our thinking, not a threat to our thinking. Second, we need to offer students who are new to the university, those in their first and second years, a far more sophisticated introduction to the world of texts and text-making than is usually provided in current-traditional writing-about-literature courses (see Graff Beyond). Peter Elbow suggests that we teach reading processes more actively and offers solid suggestions for doing so ("The War"). Patricia Sullivan’s study of graduate-students-as-writers indicates we need to do a better job guiding and inviting these students into our subdisciplines, making our own ways of reading, learning, and knowing more tacit and offering graduate students opportunities to develop their own disciplinary reading and writing processes as they work to produce degree-worthy final products.

It is not enough for compositionists simply to try to become the dominant group of some new hierarchy, with a new subdiscipline on top, in the middle, or on the bottom. Instead, in days of shrinking state educational budgets, of disciplinary self-examination, of fluctuating university enrollments, it will be far more productive for all members of English studies to look not at dichotomies but at continuums, not at stratification but at forms of collaboration, not at fields as competitive but as complementary, not at the university community as apolitical but as highly political, representative of our country at large and responsive to our lives in particular. Some institutions have gone much farther. At the University of Vermont there are now discussion-based introductory courses focusing on reading, writing, and the study of literature within the English major core curriculum (see Fulwiler). At SUNY Albany, the graduate programs in composition and creative writing have been combined to grant Ph.D. and M.A. degrees in Writing, Teaching, and Criticism (see North).

I have had some success in my teacher education course by embarking on a journey of self-education. When I last taught second-term first-year writing, I asked students to tell me about themselves as readers through reading literacy autobiographies and writing-to-understand-reading exercises (for many ideas in this area, see the forthcoming volume, When Writing Teachers Teach Literature, edited by Toby Fulwiler and Art Young). Because I taught the second-term course as reading-for-writers, I returned to our teacher-education classes sure that I needed to include more instruction in reading processes (see Bishop, "Teaching Writing Teachers to Teach Reading for Writing"). At the same time, I continued to raise within the English Department the larger issue concerning GTAs' own reading and writing education. I am making explicit my goal of encouraging these teachers to translate their learning to the introductory literature and creative writing courses they will eventually be teaching; together, we look for ways this can (and should) be done. In my teacher-education course, I am asking these teachers, in a sense, to help me institute writing-and-reading-within-the-
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discipline, for, in the field of English studies, we need to acknowledge the connections among those who are marginalized and those who are dominant, to understand that there are multiple modalities for learning and knowing (reading and writing, and speaking and listening), and to encourage our programs to accept the many career paths we inevitably travel—some starting in composition and moving to literature, some moving from literature to creative writing, and so on. Even more, it is time to consider how these “paths” constitute the same path, one that too often has been divided primarily for institutional convenience.

I am suggesting difficult undertakings and to some of us such changes will be almost impossible to imagine. Still, we must be more active. We need to know our history, understand our political and economic situation, and work in concert with any colleagues who indicate a willingness to talk and consider departmental conditions. Whether it means changing the writing curriculum or abolishing the first-year writing requirement, we can examine ways to keep first-year writing from remaining the national course in silence that Susan Miller claims it has become (55). As Hephzibah Roskelley tells us, we can refuse to keep writing and reading in “an unnatural partnership [that] obscures the fact that both processes are directed and produced by the force of the imagination” (139).

This awareness will only happen, of course, if we include writing and reading instruction in all our English classes. Literature professors as well as writing professors need to become writers involved in writing (just as writing professors can’t exist without reading). English departments need to include self-study and historical/political study in all their courses—from the survey of world literature to beginning drama writing to advanced rhetorical theory. Of course, all these suggestions are premised on a changed English department. For those who were in the low position but are now moving to a higher one—for those whose work life is shifting from the language of the right-hand column of terms to the language of the left-hand column of terms—it is time to challenge the status quo, to resist the complacency of “having just arrived,” and to argue that “this” is no place to be. For those of us possessing a modicum of power within English departments, we might start by changing the writing-with-literature course and then move outward, bravely. Our graduate students are feeling the ground swell of change already, and we have an opportunity to continue to fight until someone (probably everyone) loses or to change with and for our students.

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Notes

1This is certainly a broad sketch and I don’t mean to imply that these classes are free of problems; confusions of purpose sometimes certainly occur since no one has yet designed a first-semester workshop class that all composition programs accept as definitive.
If a two term sequence is to be reduced to a single term, as has happened at many institutions, the class that is retained will likely be the writing-about-literature class.

It may be useful for the narrative arguments I am developing here to point out that Sullivan's research survey was administered to four English departments, including my own. See the note on page 298 of her article; her results are congruent with my interviews, but I did not know of her work or see her results until my own conversations with graduate students had been completed.

Discussions of writing processes may result in challenges to the traditional manner of producing academic texts, a manner that Olivia Frey suggests is particularly masculinist:

In any event, I would not describe the conventions of mainstream literary critical writing as feminist. These conventions include the use of argument as the preferred mode for discussion, the importance of the objective and impersonal, the importance of a finished product without direct reference to the process by which it was accomplished, and the necessity of being thorough in order to establish proof and reach a definitive (read "objective") conclusion. A common denominator of each convention seems to be "to get it right," that is, establish cognitive authority. (509)

In the traditional literature classroom, these conventions are certainly valorized and usually there is only one "real" authority.

Both are greatly interested in understanding text production, but some seek to "read like a writer and produce publishable work" (creative writers) while others wish to "understand more of the writing process in order to improve instruction" (composition and rhetoric students). Many rhetoric GTAs do not view themselves as writers and are not willing to make strong claims of writing proficiency. I have met creative writing GTAs who may be ambivalent about their skills in a particular genre, but never any who doubt their essential writing talents.

Recently, after a year-long textbook review conducted by our first-year writing committee composed of volunteer, experienced GTA writing teachers who worked with me, we easily narrowed the field of "innovative" readers to three: Textbook, Making Meaning, and Reading(s). Our program is undergoing a curricular transformation, turning from a writing-about-literature course into a writing-with-literature-and-other-texts course. Previously, we used The Lexington Introduction to Literature which helped start that transformation with its strong reader-response and feminist theory apparatus. Even these four texts, we believe, don't begin to outline the possibilities for an innovative writing-about-literature textbook (or more reasonably, a writing with "texts including literary texts" reader). And this essay points out that more thoroughgoing changes need to take place to improve this course and our GTAs' course of study and teaching within our English departments.

Some departments might like to claim that first-semester, first-year writing isn't the only course dedicated to discussions of text production by pointing to their advanced courses. But business and technical writing, advanced expository writing, and imaginative nonfiction courses are often extremely product-oriented and under-theorized and/or taught by professors untrained in writing pedagogy who are seeking to meet their writing instruction assignment in the company of "advanced" students (see Bishop "Revising").

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