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# A Rhetoric of Fields: Orientationalist and Enactive Essays for Writing Studies

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A RHETORIC OF FIELDS:  
ORIENTATIONALIST AND ENACTIVE ESSAYS FOR WRITING STUDIES

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Daniel Louis Singer

June 2015

Advisor: Dr. Douglas Hesse

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## ABSTRACT

Beginning primarily in the late 1980s, the phrase “Writing Studies” has increasingly come to be used as a synonym for “Composition and Rhetoric.” Analyzing the orientational and disorientational significance of assuming both synonymy and distinction between the two, I argue for a methodological enactment of Writing Studies as a distinct but deeply entailed field and consider a range of conceptual, practical, political, disciplinary, institutional, curricular, and identity issues at stake in doing so. As the possibility of a Writing Studies that is non-identical to Composition has not yet been widely taken up, the potential of Writing Studies as a distinct and emergent field in its own right has not yet been fully realized, and its nature is as yet unstable. However, the conception and actual use of Writing Studies by compositionists as a distinct place in which to study writing relative to—rather than as—Composition and Rhetoric has significant potential to enable new lines of inquiry and argument for Writing Studies in the current moment and may have considerable implications for the institutional, curricular, and disciplinary capital of Composition and Rhetoric, among others (particularly, Creative Writing and English) in the future. As the field is enacted, Writing Studies provides a distinct-but-entailed location in which to make orientation and disorientation more visible within contemporary Composition and to enact paradoxically new identities and orientations to writing for individual scholars and programs.

Additionally, that distinct-but-entailed location provides new opportunities to conduct field-based inquiry and to re-examine a range of questions, including but not limited to: the interplay of field-ness and disciplinarity as Composition continues to evolve, the shifting relations between Composition and other fields and disciplines for whom writing is a subject of inquiry, the study and teaching of commonplace writing subjects in pedagogical/academic spaces and places, and the implications and limitations of field-oriented methodologies and texts as orienting and enactive tools in and beyond traditional disciplinary, institutional, and curricular contexts.

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*Part One: From Disorientation to Field*

## CHAPTER ONE

*Making Orientation and Disorientation Explicit:*

*Tales from the Life of a Potential Writing Studies Scholar*

Before a writer of any age can organize his ideas, he must decide what public to address, upon what subject, and with what purpose . . . Answering these questions constitutes orientation. You will say, “Is that all?”

— Elizabeth Hodgson, from “Orientation in English Composition,” 1914

Writing Studies is rising—and disorienting. Programs in writing abound while Composition and Rhetoric’s work as a legitimate intellectual endeavor has become more widely, if slowly, recognized. Majors, minors, and certificates in writing are now often offered in universities across the country. And the MLA jobs listings for writing scholars far outnumber those for any literature positions without the word “digital” in the job title. However, nothing rapidly rising is on stable ground, and this rise entails a degree of disorientation, which is manifest in the question of precisely what it is we are and do in Writing Studies—of exactly to whom “we” refers—and in scholars’ ongoing efforts to codify the field’s disciplinary epistemology, identity, and curriculum in the university (e.g., Lauer, Fulkerson, Balzhizer and McLeod; Wardle; Downs and Wardle; North et al; Johnson; Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon; Phelps and Ackerman; Smit). The majority of these scholars have come from Composition and Rhetoric, the field that has most directly laid claim to “Writing Studies” as a name. Though, as the study of writing continues to rise, we should be wary of claims that Composition and Rhetoric *is* Writing Studies, just as compositionists learned long ago to be wary of claims that Literature *is* English. Writing Studies is not *only* Composition. Instead, we should consider Writing Studies as a potential field, emergent and ultimately distinct from Composition and Rhetoric. However, contemporary Composition, “for better or worse,” writes Lance Massey, “is a remarkably heterogeneous network of practices, attitudes, and interests” in which “we still face something like a disciplinary identity crisis . . .” (306), a state of affairs that has significant capacity to disorient anyone looking to consider and do work in a Writing Studies that is non-identical to it.

So, the problem at hand is the disorientational and orientational potential of Writing Studies and Composition and Rhetoric. Orientation and disorientation are features of all fields and virtually all human experience, and considering Writing Studies and Composition from an orientationalist bent offers some exciting and challenging insights. In a nominal sense, orientation simply describes something's bearing in a place and its tendencies, its leanings toward things, given its position. Orientation describes *where* we are, in what *direction* we face, and the way we *experience* phenomena, the way we *look at* things, given the particular vantage granted by our location and direction. Disorientation, likewise, simply describes an orientational state in which we are unsure of our bearings, where we might be (or should be) headed, and how to get there. What I will argue then, is that Writing Studies and Composition are disoriented and disorienting fields for many—both in and outside the academy—but that the nature of that disorientation is not well understood. What I offer here is a) an examination of the orientational potential and disorientational complex of Writing Studies, which is a pragmatic problem of human experience and practice in the field that is deeply entailed with the disorientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric, as well as b) a way of analyzing that disorientational complex.

This is not to say that compositionists have not already been actively grappling with disorientation. We certainly have been, but our historical attempts to do so have provided less in the way of an *actionable* understanding, beyond calls for institutional, curricular, and disciplinary redress, and much more in the way of concrete *manifestations* of our orientation and disorientation. And the concrete signs of confusion in the field are

easily seen in the myriad debates about: the nature of our field (to what degree are we defined by the First-Year Composition course and to what advantage or disadvantage do we allow ourselves to be a “service discipline” defined by our occupation of a supporting position to rest of the university); the primacy of certain of our methods, topics, and genres as central to what we do (ethnography, discourse analysis, critical pedagogy and gender/race/class; technical/professional writing, academic writing, creative writing; essays, digital compositions like video and webtexts); the nature of our subject (do we study “writing,” or “rhetoric,” or “composing” and what do we propose as the difference/relations between these; are we about skills and literacies or compositional processes and products; to what degree is our central subject of inquiry defined by what Lynn Worsham and others have called “the pedagogical imperative,” according to which we are driven to research writing and writing related issues primarily relative to instructors’ classroom practice and to students); and even our institutional name and place within the University (are we “Writing Studies” or “Composition” or “Composition and Rhetoric” or something else altogether; should we be—or should we be understood as—more institutionally aligned with the English department, with Communication, with New Media Studies, or should we subsist on our own as freestanding programs and departments).

All of these debates have very practical and immediate consequences for us when we attempt to *be in* and *do* both Writing Studies and Composition and Rhetoric, when we try to articulate and defend our institutional positions, the content of our curriculum, and the requirements we place on ourselves and others in identifying both who gets to

participate and how we/they should do so. For example, we have seen many programs split off from English departments and establish their own independent curricula in universities across the U.S., relative to the specialties and institutional aims of their faculty, which has immediate implications for the institutional criteria for belonging (we more often look for advanced graduate work and publications in Composition and Rhetoric than in Creative Writing for faculty appointments in our “Writing” programs, though we might often see the latter as relevant). This also has pragmatic consequences for curriculum and opportunity (even with a doctorate in English, as a “compositionist,” I am unlikely to teach literature courses in an “English” department where a “Writing” program also exists separately), and for the disciplinary boundaries of attention and ownership (who *owns* the writing-lands in the University and what *kinds* of writing are our special territory?).

Likewise, in scholarship, compositionists have been attempting for years to chart out the major topical foci in the field at a given time (e.g., Richard Fulkerson, “Four Philosophies of Composition” and “Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century”; David Smit, *The End of Composition Studies*; Kathleen Blake Yancey, “Made Not Only of Words: Composition in Four Keys”) to say what we seem to be and do as a collective and then either describe or call for some future state of the field that coheres around those topics relative to where we are in a given historical moment. And yet the debates continue relatively unabated. While attempts to codify the nature of the field, whether institutionally and curricularly or through disciplinary research and debate, have produced a robust historical understanding of Composition, exciting advancements in our

institutional position, and a high degree of breadth and depth in our curriculum, disorientation persists because we have mistaken the symptoms (confusion about the nature of the field, its subjects and methods, its disciplinary and institutional constituency) for the real ill, and so our cures have been, at best, only partially effective.

So, rather than continuing to rehearse debates about Composition's nature and institutional position, I want to suggest a different way forward in understanding and addressing the disorientation of Writing Studies. I suggest we not concentrate first on the nature and historical development of these debates to arrive at an argument for some form of disciplinary, institutional, and curricular coherence, not on potentials for curricular change, not on ways to align with or separate from other disciplines and departments on campus. Instead, I suggest we look more directly at the nature of disorientation and orientation itself because we will only begin to address disorientation in either field by treating the disciplinary, institutional, and curricular *demonstrations* of the confusion.<sup>1</sup> At base, orientation and disorientation are only *manifest* in disciplinary research, institutional position, and curricular content but subsist at a level *below* them. So, rather than asking if we are really about process or product, really about teaching or research, I suggest we begin by looking at some of the likely *sites* of orientation and disorientation that call for such self-questioning. And we can best observe the (dis)orientational complex at work in those sites by analyzing the experiences and behaviors of individual agents rather than by comparing syllabi and tracing disciplinary histories.

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<sup>1</sup> There are a number of political and hierarchical elements at play here, as well, though these will be dealt with primarily in the later chapters.

## 1. Disorientation of the Potential Writing Studies Scholar

### 1.1. Orient Toward Sally

Sally is a demonstrative though not necessarily representative amalgam of a range of individuals I have encountered as colleagues in various program and departments where I have taught, at academic conferences, and elsewhere who perceive a potential difference between, for example, a “compositionist” and a “writing theorist,” between “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric.” And Sally is disoriented.

Sally has an orientation, in the most general sense—she is oriented toward writing and writers. But she is disoriented because she is, or more specifically, because she wants to be something that is not yet well-defined in her field: a Writing Studies scholar. She sees that a certain interchangeability of the terms “Composition and Rhetoric” and “Writing Studies” has emerged in 21<sup>st</sup> century Composition scholarship. However, given recent developments, like the successful lobbying attempt by the Visibility Project for the “assignment of a code series to rhetoric and composition/*writing studies* in the federal Classification of Instructional Programs,” she also acknowledges that the naming of fields and their agents is significant and deceptively complex.<sup>2</sup> Used to denote a unique

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<sup>2</sup> See Louis Wetherbee Phelps and John Ackerman in “Making the Case for Disciplinarity in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies: The Visibility Project” in the recent “Future of Rhetoric and Composition” issue of *College Composition and Communication*. A similar concern is at work in Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu’s investigation of the functions of naming in and between Composition and/or Rhetoric. The authors report on an interaction posted by Bruce McComiskey on the WPA Listserv in 2006 in which a colleague had told him that she was “a composition specialist” whereas he was a “rhetorical specialist—the implication was that we [didn’t] think the same way and we [didn’t] do the same things. Honestly, I didn’t even understand the comment” (n. pag.). As Horner and Lu write, McComiskey’s disorientation and subsequent questioning are based on the assumption “that rhetoric and



field of scholarly attention and production, this naming matters wherever we are concerned with the ways naming orients agents to certain constellations of belief and action and with the ways that naming manifests emerging orientations and disorientations surrounding the study of Writing.

To test this, Sally considers the difference between “writing” and “Writing Studies.” No identifiable discipline (that is, no reified, distinct branch of knowledge with attendant apprenticeships, institutions, curricula, epistemological and textual canons, etc.) is uniquely denoted by use of the term “writing” because there are several disciplines for whom “writing” is a subject of inquiry (Composition, Rhetoric, Creative Writing, Literature, English, and so on).<sup>3</sup> However, where the term “writing” is not used to denote a common subject of inquiry among several disciplines but as a proper name, one can conceivably be referring to a constellation of those several disciplines for whom “writing” is observably a significant question. “Writing Studies,” then, should logically

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composition are inseparable. But . . . his questions arise from his discovery that, however incomprehensibly to him, others in fact see the two as not only separable but separate . . .” (294).

<sup>3</sup> The relations between “disciplines” and “fields” are complex and will be treated in Chapter 2. In short form, “the term *discipline*,” as Julie Thompson Klein writes, “signifies the tools, methods, procedures, exempla, concepts, and theories that account coherently for a set of objects or subjects” (*Interdisciplinarity* 104, emphasis in the original). Disciplines, then, might be best understood in this context as *types* of fields that bear these features—and, because fields are both locations *of* disciplines and are often also *within* disciplines, disciplinary components partially structure the fields within them (for example, the field of Game Studies within the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric—please see Chapter 5) and are also oriented by the fields in which those disciplines are located (for example, the discipline[s] of Literature in the field of the Humanities or the Liberal Arts).

name precisely that constellation, and Sally suspects this might be her field—her place—more than *only* in Composition and Rhetoric.

Further, she suspects that name “Writing Studies”—as denoting a distinct place in which to be and to do things—may potentially have an orienting effect for her in terms of identity in certain ways. For example, she considers the fact that she is obviously one of many people around the world all potentially denoted by the proper name “Sally,” but that she does not feel compelled to pay attention to or produce anything specific in response to uses of the word “Sally.” However, she may well feel so compelled to attend to or produce something specific in response to the proper name “Writing Studies” on any occasion of its use, so long as she believes and intends that this name suggests some field of which she wishes to be a part and in which she has some stake (whether politically, pedagogically, institutionally, personally, or socially).

At the same time, she cannot help noting the seemingly careless interchangeability of “Composition and Rhetoric” with “Writing Studies,” though she does not think naming this function “careless” should call for reproach. What is significant is specifically the capacity of many composition scholars and others to refer to the field of Comp-Rhet *as* Writing Studies, she thinks, because this can clearly be done *without care*, without particular concern or anxiety, without an expectation of attack for the assumptive conflation of the two terms. This, she thinks, would seem to indicate a certain assumption that what Composition and Rhetoric effectively studies is writing, whether as its special province in the University or not, and that there is then no

particular reason to expect anyone's being especially disoriented by the conflation or to take issue with the assumption that the two are identical.

So, Sally perceives that there *may* be a difference between Writing Studies and Composition and Rhetoric, and also that if there *is* a difference, being generally “oriented toward writing” in one or the other might mean something different in practical terms. However, she also perceives that even suggesting this possibility, given that she wants to *do* something in response, is tricky, fraught with complexity, against even the simple commonplace of using the phrase “Writing Studies” interchangeably with “Composition and Rhetoric.” So, the problem of disorientation for Sally—and for anyone like her—is not abstract, not diffuse. It is immediate, local, and pragmatic: how should she *proceed*, how should she *act*, what should she *do* as a Writing Studies scholar, and how will that square with her current disciplinary identity?

### *1.2 Identification and Belonging*

Sally is currently employed as a compositionist in a medium-sized American university at which she holds a lectureship in the Writing and Rhetoric program. She primarily teaches courses in First-Year Composition, which her department understands to be an introductory course in writing and rhetorical skills and knowledge made up of a series of literacies (textual, digital, rhetorical, informational), though her particular university seems still to understand FYC and her entire faculty unit as offering a service course designed to teach students “how to write” or “how to be better writers” so that they will be more successful in other courses and in their post-collegiate careers.

Additionally, as the Writing and Rhetoric program split off from the university's English department several years before she arrived,<sup>4</sup> both the administration and the established curriculum tacitly (and sometimes explicitly) ask that her courses be observably different from writing courses offered by the English department. She recognizes this tension to be resolved differently in her FYC courses than in the few upper-division courses she teaches such that, in her FYC classes, she is careful not to include so many readings or assignments that would easily be construed as "creative writing" or "literature" that someone looking over her syllabus might wonder whether she is teaching a course in Literature or Creative Writing when she ought to be providing her students a course in Composition/Writing and Rhetoric. In her upper-division courses, however, the problem is a bit trickier to deal with. For example, when she first started teaching her Travel Writing course, she had been explicitly directed to "include some sources from Rhetoric" and to be sure that her syllabus would not imply that it was a course in Travel Writing "as literature or creative writing." But, in practice, she found that her workshops in that course just as often approximated her past experiences as a creative writer—with the exception of a more explicitly rhetorical focus—than anything else.

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<sup>4</sup> As early as 2004, the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition under the direction of Louise Wetherbee Phelps of the CCCC Visibility Project noted that, "although many Rhetoric and Composition programs are still located nominally in English degrees, or placed in English departments, most have a distinct identity and have moved toward autonomy within those structures, or even separation in independent units" (5). Likewise, the Council of Writing Program Administrators recognized more than 30 independent "Writing Departments and Programs Affiliate" represented among its membership in 2013, though the number of independent programs nationally is certainly higher, as several notable independent programs do not appear on the list.

Like several of her colleagues and at least half of the adjunct pool in her program, Sally completed an MFA in Creative Writing and intended to pursue a position as an assistant professor of Creative Writing in an English department before turning her attention to Composition and Rhetoric as her professional focus. Long before training in the discipline, of course, she taught Composition as an adjunct—both during her MFA program and afterward—in programs much like the one she teaches in now. Like many others, she found the experience somewhat disorienting but common, given that, as Sharon Crowley wrote more than fifteen years ago (though her statements are, in some cases, still accurate today), “there is no built-in institutional assurance that people hired to teach composition know anything about it or how to teach it,” but also that “many part-time teachers of composition train to teach literature or creative writing and find, when they have finished their degrees, that no work is available in these fields” and so “become part-time teachers of the required introductory composition course, by default” (6). Sally was aware of this tension as an adjunct and MFA student, and she is even more aware of it now as a compositionist. But then, as now, she finds that tension difficult to deal with.

On the one hand, she recognizes that, as a compositionist, her teaching of writing is often radically different from when and where she was not a compositionist. For example, she found that she was less likely to emphasize argumentation in projects, less likely to introduce certain specialized terms and concepts as orientational tools for her students, less likely to draw on Composition scholarship to either inform her pedagogy or for readings and topical content in her courses. On the other hand, she balked then and does now (though less often these days) at the idea that a person with graduate or post-

graduate expertise in creative writing should be seen as not knowing “anything about composition or how to teach it.” The problem, she thought—and still thinks—is that this position seems to suggest that “writers” who study “writing,” in whatever form, may not automatically *belong* in a field dedicated to writing, and/or that “composition” and “writing” might be two such different subjects that advanced training in one might not provide expertise in the other. Of course, she also is aware of this problem as an ongoing scholarly debate about relations between Composition and Creative Writing, particularly in terms of interdisciplinarity and inclusivity of subjects and practices between them (e.g., Timothy Mayers’ *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English*, Douglas Hesse’s “The Place of Creative Writing in Composition Studies” and “Who Owns Creative Nonfiction,” Dianne Donnelly’s *Establishing Creative Writing as an Academic Discipline*, among others.).

She has experienced a version of this disorienting tension elsewhere, as well. Sally identified first as “a writer” as much as “a poet,” and when asked by her family or strangers at a party what she did, it made as much sense to her to say that she “studied writing” as to say she “studied poetry.” And she found, often, that saying she was a “writer” and “studied writing” in her graduate work was generally accepted without a great deal of confusion or questioning. She did find, however, depending with whom she was speaking, that identifying as a “writer” instead of a “poet,” or vice versa, led to different responses. When she was speaking with other creative writers, she sometimes found that identifying as a “poet” who “studied writing” in her MFA seemed to make her interlocutors assume that poetry was her *career*. This response was often related but

different, she found, when her family and others outside the professional/academic world of writing asked what she studied. In those cases, she often found that identifying as a “poet” who “studied writing” led to a relatively consistent question: “So, what will you do with that when you graduate?”

Finally, she found that telling people in academic circles, particularly those outside the Creative Writing community, that she was a “poet” versus a “writer” who “studied writing” produced a variety of responses that surprised her. For example, she found that, regardless of whether she said she “studied writing,” identifying as either “poet” or “writer” led most faculty and students in the English department (which housed her MFA program) to often assume that she was a “creative writer” who would write and publish some specialized, “creative” form of the “writing” that she studied and that she would eventually seek work as a creative writing instructor or editor if she were successful in her pursuits. She found that when she did *not* identify as a “poet” or “writer” but said only that she “studied writing,” the response was often different. In these cases, she often observed that her interlocutors in her university seemed less sure of what she was about or where to place her in the department. She noted that they often asked follow-up questions to discern whether she was a “creative writer” or a “writing studies person/compositionist/comp-rhet scholar/etc.” From these types of conversational exchanges, she came to the relatively obvious conclusion that the figures “writer,” “creative writer,” and “poet” (and presumably similar figures like “novelist,” “short story writer,” and others) mattered a) because the figure she used to identify herself changed the assumptions that others made about her and her work, as well as the questions they

asked, and b) because simply suggesting that she was “studying writing” as a “poet” or a “writer” or as something else altogether (in particular, variants of “compositionist” or “writing studies person”) seemed to *mean* something radically different about what she was and where she belonged, depending with whom she was speaking. That is, she understood that any particular identity toward writing has both orienting and disorienting potential, and that such identities are used by agents to both identify orientations and to “get oriented.”<sup>5</sup>

## **2. “Getting Oriented” to the Potential Field of Writing Studies (Or, the Actual History of a Potential)**

### *2.1 Existing “Writing Studies”*

These days, the problem is different. Sally has gotten oriented *and* disoriented. She is oriented in Composition and Rhetoric but is disoriented also. She is an accomplished compositionist *and* creative writer, and she feels she belongs, most of the time, in the field of Composition and Rhetoric, but she also has the sense that her orientation to writing *includes* but is not accurately *totalized* by the various orientations of Composition and Rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> And this, in itself, is somewhat disorienting, but so is her

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<sup>5</sup> Some readers will have Kenneth Burke’s notion of “terministic screens” and/or “interpretive attitudes” in mind as accounting for this. The connection is apt, though the relations between orientations, their attitudinal functions, and terms are complex—a problem that will be discussed later on in several forms (between language and subjects in Chapter 3 and more directly between terms, orientations, and fields in Chapter 5, for example).

<sup>6</sup> This construction may bring to mind a certain language-based parallel with James Kinneavy’s attempts to move Composition and Rhetoric toward anti-positivistic theories



occasional sense that even as an expert in the field she may not be able to accurately totalize for her students what the field is—or for that matter, to do so for herself. It is not that she does not understand what the field of Composition *is*. It is that her developed expertise shows her that the field of Composition is clearly and actionably very many things, defined in very many ways, and that questions of how best to position oneself within that field are not easily resolved in many cases. And, of course, the Comp-Rhet graduate students in her university often express a similar difficulty in trying to identify exactly what the whole of the field they are trying to join as scholars is and does: “What’s the whole thing *really*? Literacy? First-Year Composition? Pedagogy? Rhetoric? Genre?” She does, however, find that simply researching some of these core terms in Composition and Rhetoric helps her get oriented.

So, she sets out to “get oriented” by researching some of the core terms, at which point she is again confronted with the term “Writing Studies.” And she remembers thinking the phrase had potential—that it provided a sense of where she might want to go,

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and taxonomies, drawing distinctions between the aims of various types of discourse, and emphasizing the multidimensionality of the discursive self and texts. For example, various discursive aims “orient” texts and authors without totalizing those orientations. They are both field-specific and overlapping—e.g., literary discourse, for example, “incorporates expressive elements and thematic or persuasive components,” as do scientific and other discourses—but such overlapping cannot totalize the orientations and aims of any discursive *type* because “in many cases in these overlaps, one of the aims is [simply] dominant” and the other essentially functions as a means to another aim’s end (61-62). Further both Kinneavy’s claims that “beyond text lies the context of the situation of which the text is a part,” in which he includes “psychological and social motivations for speaking and writing” among other elements (such as “proxemics, the study of space distances in communication networks”), and that “beyond the situation context lies the cultural context, the nature and conventions of which make the situational context permissible and meaningful” such that “no text is autonomous” (23-24) might be seen as providing additional parallels. In either case, the trick is not reducing the functions of orientations, aims, and fields to discourse. Please see Chapters 3 and 4 for details.

where she might want to belong, either within or extending from a position as a Composition and Rhetoric scholar. The immediate problem she encounters, though, is that researching Writing Studies generally leads her right back to sources in Composition and Rhetoric—next to nothing pops up specifying any core concepts as those of Writing Studies *separately*.

However, rather than assuming that there is nothing really to find, Sally simply makes the (powerful and deliberate) assumption that “Writing Studies exists.”<sup>7</sup> She is aware that actively *claiming* Writing Studies as “actually existing” might be disorienting for compositionists because the idea that we *should* assume Writing Studies exists is likely to be seen less as challenging than as vaguely ridiculous, though we might not be fully certain of why this is so. However, she reasons, the use of the phrase in Composition and Rhetoric has become a discursive commonplace. So, two pragmatically entailed claims must be undeniably true. First, the *phrase* “Writing Studies” exists. Second, and beyond the existence of the phrase, we have *already* assumed that *something* exists to which that phrase clearly and definitively refers. And, so, it would be at least momentarily disorienting to see a scholar in Composition and Rhetoric argue that we should assume the existence of Writing Studies—because we already comfortably do so and commonly invoke the phrase. However, Sally thinks that the existence of the phrase “Writing Studies” in our discourse *should* be much more profoundly disorienting and that it is only the assumption that its commonplace synonymy with and denotation of

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<sup>7</sup> “Exists” is meant colloquially here but gestures toward a more complex problem of observation. Please see Chapter 5 on observation and behavioral grouping for details.

Composition and Rhetoric may be assumed *not* to be a challenge that has allowed any collective comfort with the term.

Remembering that she has already a) come to the conclusion that the commonly held interchangeability of “Writing Studies” and “Rhetoric and Composition” is significant for a number of reasons, b) that the two may, in fact be non-identical, and c) and finding little-to-no specifying *content* when attempting to research that field through its core concepts, she makes two decisions. First, Sally decides to actively, rather than passively, assume that Writing Studies exists, which means she accepts the premise that obviously it does exist but questions what the nature of that existence actually is. Second, she decides to adopt a productive and intentional level of discomfort, of discomfit actually, with “Writing Studies” as a core term, possibly the field’s *only* core term that may be researched.

## 2.2 Searching “Writing Studies” (Google It)

In her inquiry, she finds clear and objective evidence that the figure of “Writing Studies” has been steadily (exponentially) growing in presence in the academy, and not just in Composition. Using Google Scholar as a measure of simple terminological presence by decade, she can trace a relatively dramatic increase in the use of the term within scholarly discourse. She considers simple data from Google Scholar searches significant not because they yield anything particularly comprehensive but because, as the database that currently indexes the largest number of accessible scholarly texts in the English language, successive searches of “Writing Studies” by decade offers a suggestive

numerical data set that gives some credence to the idea that “Writing Studies” not only exists but is rising. On its own, this methodology is obviously limited to a surface investigation and unsuited to deeper analysis of individual textual uses of “Writing Studies.” It is, functionally speaking, a simple meta-analysis and suggests only an up-trending presence of the phrase in scholarly writing, though some of the data is surprising.

While “Google Scholar’s growing popularity within academia speaks to its potential as a viable research tool” (Badke 47), the more important factors in observing the growing presence of the figure of “Writing Studies” across disciplinary boundaries are that a) “any notion of controlled vocabulary searching or limitation by material type needs to be abandoned,” and b) while Google Scholar’s index is far from comprehensive, it is simply more enormous than any other available scholarly database (Badke 48). We can, then, reasonably expect a generally less delimited view of phrasal usage than we could hope to be afforded by any more standard academic database. So, what is particularly useful and interesting to Sally is the broad view of “Writing Studies” this method affords, relieved almost entirely of her or others’ disciplinary bias toward the phrase. As such, while researching the phrasal usage of ‘Writing Studies’ in scholarly writing through Google Scholar provides little in the way of deep data about the semantic values and referents associated with the phrase, Sally does gain access to an immediately accessible and objective, albeit tentative, historical trajectory of the term without being disciplinarily bounded. And, in this data, she finds some concrete basis, beyond Composition and Rhetoric’s own disciplinary history, for what she had assumed to be the

case: that there is little presence of “Writing Studies” as a coherent field to be referenced by the phrase prior to the mid-twentieth century, and that in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the usage of the phrase has continued to grow at an almost staggering rate.

Searching by decade from 1500 to 1870 yields virtually no results, and from 1870 to 1960, no decade yields more than twelve—virtually all of which are potentially irrelevant to a claim Sally might wish to make about the presence of an idea for a field called “Writing Studies.” In fact, most of these even through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century represent only instances in which some author has used the phrase “writing studies” to denote an act whereby a writer writes material based on or as part of an inquiry, or are the result of a search-engine contrivance in which “writing” is the final word of a sentence that is followed by another in which “studies” is the first (e.g., “. . . of this type of writing. Studies in gestalt . . .”).

As an aside, she thinks, this last finding also brings to light some of the baggage that comes with use of the term “studies” in the first place. While identifying “studies of writing” (in whatever form) independent of a concern with the rise of fields and disciplines is not necessarily problematic, adding the word “studies” to a field-designation can produce significant political and definitional complications. For example, regarding the rise of Creative Writing *Studies*, Timothy Mayers, echoing Myers in *The Elephants Teach*, suggests that, “if it seems unusual to append the word ‘studies’ to ‘creative writing,’ that is only because creative writers have so frequently resisted such acknowledgment, preferring instead to regard their institutional position as purely incidental to what and who they are” (*(Re)Writing* 60). Likewise, Mayers has argued

elsewhere that, “within the current realm of higher education in the United States, creative writing and creative writing studies are two distinct enterprises” such that “*creative writing* is the academic enterprise of hiring successful writers . . . to teach college-level creative writing courses” and “*creative writing studies*, on the other hand, is a still-emergent enterprise that has been set in motion by some of the problems and internal contradictions of creative writing” and is, by contrast, “a field of scholarly inquiry and research” (“One Simple Word” 218). On a disciplinary level, we can then at least acknowledge that appending “Studies” to “Writing” may implicate political/identity issues, and that, on a field-level, the same appendature may inscribe a certain expectation of formal research and inquiry as a defining characteristic of “Writing Studies” that may locate the endeavor squarely in *scholarly* space.

Then, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and concurrent with the rise of Composition and Rhetoric as a legitimated endeavor, use of the phrase “Writing Studies” to denote a *field* booms. From 1960 to 1970, the results jump to 63—more than in all of the preceding decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century combined. The following decade brings nearly quadruple again (220); doubling again from there between 1980 and 1990 (496); doubling once again from 1990-2000 (903); exploding between 2000 and 2010 (3,020); and, in only the first four years of the present decade, more than 3,700 results already.<sup>8</sup> And, in those thousands, while the occasional search-engine contrivance of finding each word split between successive sentences persists, the results list is overwhelmingly populated by

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, it is worth keeping in mind the corresponding explosion of access to digitized content from scholarly journals and books over this same period in attempting to draw any larger conclusions from this number.

documents using “Writing Studies” *as* a phrasal unit denoting a field in which a constellation of people have turned their attentions to writing, though the exact referent is still inconsistent. If that rate remains relatively constant, we might expect to see upwards of 9,000 documents published in just a ten-year span making use of the phrase and indexed by Google Scholar, which represents a more than 750% increase in the use of “Writing Studies” to suggest a field of the study of writing—whether as Composition and Rhetoric or not—in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century from the same usage in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

While these numbers say nothing substantial about what “Writing Studies” actually refers to, in light of these data, Sally is ready to accept the idea that Writing Studies *as a scholarly term* used to describe some field is, in fact, a surprisingly recent development. Additionally, she believes that the last decade and a half, in particular, has seen a dramatic enough increase in awareness of and use of that term, regardless of its semantic value, to imply a reasonable need to consider it much more critically before making any attempt at an argument either about the figure *of* Writing Studies or *for* the field to which it may refer. Trained in Composition and Rhetoric, she realizes that this type of rise-to-presence calling for direct critical attention is actually relatively normal for other core terms, as well (e.g., literacy, genre, and rhetorical situation) and that this has often served as a justification for careful, and influential, scholarly investigation. Lloyd Bitzer comes readily to mind as a paradigmatic example, in this sense, in that his recognition of “the rhetorical situation” as a term of substantive usage and concern prompted him to note that “no major theorist ha[d] treated rhetorical situation thoroughly

as a distinct subject in rhetorical theory” and that many seemed to ignore that problem even while use of the phrase was proliferating (2), and so to publish his landmark reorientational work on the term.

In similar response, Sally notes that while a concern with and use of the term “Writing Studies” has been steadily increasing, little systematic study (even something as small as what she has just done) has emerged from scholars treating “Writing Studies” as a distinct and complex term in Composition and Rhetoric. We know that the last two decades have seen a relative explosion in the presence of *something* being called “Writing Studies” in scholarly thinking (as the term appears in more than fifty times as many scholarly texts in only the past four years as it did in the entire decade from 1960 to 1970 when its use first significantly jumps). And so, Sally thinks, we may reasonably suspect that now is the moment in which to start asking about what we do and do not know about “Writing Studies,” and to make some strategic claims about what we can do with it, mean by it, say both about and for it as a field.

### *2.3 Meaning “Writing Studies”*

In general, the earliest associations of the term “Writing Studies” virtually all predictably cohere to some type of study, as scholarship or otherwise. The earliest use of the term as referring specifically to a type of scholarship appears to be in an article, perhaps predictive in its location in a pedagogically-oriented publication, *Educational Research Bulletin*. Published in December, 1926, “The Kindergarten-Primary Courses of Study of Four Ohio Cities” by Josephine MacLatchy utilizes the phrase to designate a



constellation of texts concerned with the inscriptive practices of students, e.g., “The discussion of writing in the series of booklets devoted to the subject offers excellent suggestions, based upon a thorough knowledge of the findings of the more recent *writing studies*” (378, emphasis added). Though there is a certain tempting connection to modern Composition and Rhetoric in the sentence-level pairing of “students” with the phrase “writing studies,” there is no indication whatsoever that MacLatchy’s study or others like it from this period are referring to a field or academic discipline concerned with the study of writing as a subject beyond simple inscription.

There is also the early emergence of the phrase “writing studies” to denote a social-rhetorical act, as in more scientific or other contexts in which one might “write a study” of the type we refer to when claiming that “studies show nine out of ten Americans prefer Crest to Colgate” or as in the writing of *etudes*: “If we had contented ourselves with *writing studies* in social change, we might have made in the long run a contribution to criticism, and we would have little now for which to apologize (Hicks 28, my emphasis). However, none of these seems to refer to the field in which Sally—and anyone like her—wants to operate and get oriented.

The first uses of uses of the term to designate a field in which writing is a central subject (beyond writing-as-inscription) seem to have appeared only in the 1980s, wherein we begin to see irregular and sporadic use of phrasing that positions “Writing Studies” for the first time as a *field* in which one could get oriented and act.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, the

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<sup>9</sup> Some readers will likely have in mind here the related concepts of “discourse community” and “activity system,” both of which are apt. James Porter’s description of discourse community as “a group of individuals bound by a common interest who

earliest use of the term “Writing Studies” that does so in any publication on a mass scale seems to have first appeared not in any scholarly publication at all but in the Education section of *The New York Times* in early April, 1987. However, even in this inaugural instance, the phrase “Writing Studies” is directly entailed with and used to represent a form of Composition and Rhetoric. The article, “Writing Studies: Beyond Mechanics” publicizes the then-current shifts in Composition’s orientation to student writing through process models by reporting on the then-upcoming publication of *The Architecture of Argument: A Cross-Disciplinary Rhetoric* by David Kaufer, an associate professor of Rhetoric at Carnegie Mellon (along with two colleagues who are largely ignored in the article, Cheryl Geisler and Christine Neuwirth).

The article a) focuses on a rhetorician as an author, b) focuses further on that rhetorician’s attempt to shift focus from textual artifacts to the production of potential texts in FYC courses, and c) by extension, implicates Composition and Rhetoric as Writing Studies by *nominating* the entire enterprise “Writing Studies” in the article’s title and then offering up the rhetorician and his Composition textbook and views on Composition courses as representative objects therein. Sally reasons that this is historically interesting but that its real significance is that, just as Composition and

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communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated” (38), and David Russell’s construction of activity systems as “goal-directed, historically situated, cooperative human interactions” and “consisting of a subject (a person or persons), an object(ive) (an objective or goal or common task), and tools (including signs) that mediate the interaction” (53) are both relevant, though non-identical to this sense of “field.” In short form, fields are locations *within* which discourse communities and activity systems occur and bear on the orientations of agents. This is not necessarily to say that fields “create” activity systems and discourse communities, as the actions of agents within both can “create” fields, as well. Please see Chapter 2 for a discussion of this function in terms of relations between fields and disciplines.

Rhetoric cannot help but *be* whatever artifacts, claims, knowledge, terminologies, participation, institutions, curricula, and disciplinary identities are put forth under the heading “Composition and Rhetoric,” so must it be with Writing Studies. The field *is* what it looks at and by whom, *is* what is observed by others when they try to see what the field looks at and who does the looking therein. The *Times* article, in fact, concludes with a quote that exemplifies this relation of looking and being in a developing field. “Most composition courses are museum guides to great works, but students receive no formal training in writing,” Kaufer explains. “We want students to experience authorship, not just report on what the grownups are saying.” Though we should certainly be a bit suspicious of Kaufer’s characterization of “most Composition courses” as being essentially literary critical in focus and needing to move toward actually experiencing writing, which would be somewhat anachronistic by the late 1980s, the framing of his and his colleagues’ orientational goal seems apropos to an attempt to move again from Composition and Rhetoric to Writing Studies.

From the late 1980s on turns out to be when the assumption of “Writing Studies” *by* Composition and Rhetoric *as* a synonym for Composition and Rhetoric and its concerns actually occurs. In scholarly texts published later in the same year as the *Times* article (just for a quick sampler), there are instances that certainly posit “Writing Studies” as a field but that clearly understand that field to be “Composition and Rhetoric,” e.g.: “Some recent practical and theoretical work in *writing studies* has emphasized that writers’ processes and products must be understood in terms of their contexts, contexts which are created as participants and settings interact“ (McCarthy 235, emphasis added)

or “The difference between these writers exemplifies what might be called the ‘paradox of control *in writing studies*,” followed immediately by the contextualizing identity-claim that “as writers, teachers, and researchers, *we* know that writing is often a surprisingly complex process of discovery, learning, and change, yet we still often try to teach writing (and sell writing programs to administrators) by arguing that our courses help students ‘control’ their writing processes,” such that “the language of control, thus, has a double-edged *place in our field*” (Brooke 405, emphasis added). The coincidence of these first uses of the term “Writing Studies” this way and within a period of a few months, both in public and scholarly publications, suggests that the term was already “in the air”—but print reifies. And the standard use of “Writing Studies” to denote the field and concerns of Composition and Rhetoric remained mostly unchanged throughout the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Sally finds the first significant inklings of difference.

Looking for a differentiating definition, she comes across the website for The Institute for Writing Studies at St. John’s University. The institute, as the site reports, “houses three programs: the First-Year Writing Program, University Writing Centers, and the Writing Across the Curriculum program” and is “dedicated to fostering a vibrant writing culture throughout the University, serving as a nexus for research, teaching, assessment, and service in all areas of writing: academic, creative, professional, and multimodal.” Sounds suspiciously identical to a Composition and Rhetoric program, Sally thinks, minus the inclusion of creative writing explicitly in the topical mix, if not in the institutional arrangement.

Next, however, she encounters, finally, something more like what she has been looking for all along—a webtext fortuitously titled “Notes Toward a Working Definition of ‘Writing Studies’” linked on the Institute’s site. The article, published in 2009 (and since taken down) by Derek Owens, the Institute’s director, asks precisely the question Sally has been asking from the beginning, just in programmatic terms:

So what exactly is "writing studies"? The term is fairly recent; a decade ago one would be hard put to find it used in conjunction with any academic program. But today there are a growing number of undergraduate and graduate programs that use this term in describing their mission. Writing Studies programs have their origins in the field of composition studies, commonly referred to as composition-rhetoric or comp/rhet. (n.pag.)

And, while there is certainly a question as to how widely this view is shared (and the relative uniqueness of this text would suggest that it is not), “There we have it!” she thinks. A direct claim that “Writing Studies” exists, in fact programmatically, as an *emergence* from “Composition and Rhetoric,” which must logically necessitate the assumption of non-identity between them!

Composition studies is a broad and multi-faceted discipline, home to a variety of research areas . . . But despite the breadth of research in composition studies, many unfamiliar with the field tend to associate it with little more than freshman composition. In an attempt to convey the wider variety of scholarship found in composition/rhetoric, the term "writing studies" has begun to surface, shifting the focus from (first-year) composition to an identification with writing more broadly. (n.pag.)

So, Writing Studies is that field which has emerged from Composition, for institutional reasons if nothing else, to study writing more broadly.

Of course, things are not really so simple. To what degree, she wonders, does this institutional definition provide for a Writing Studies person license to study and teach creative writing, given a position as a Composition scholar? And, for that matter, given

the real range of what Composition and Rhetoric actually studies—which now incorporates a wide range of new media texts—isn't “composition,” once unchained from the FYC, by far the broader study and “writing” by far the narrower?

To parse this out, Sally considers an example of what is becoming a prototypical introductory claim to difference in scholarship that *does* attend to the emergence of “Writing Studies.” Cheryl Ball states, in attempting to get her audience oriented to the field in which she is working, “in the USA, ‘writing studies’ refers to the fields of composition and rhetoric (and not to creative writing or other aesthetic fields – a shame since creative writers have been the impetus behind a shift in composition practices to literary hypertext, hypermedia, and, now, new media)” (393). Ball notes a potential that Composition and Rhetoric, however, has actually begun to shift away “from *writing* to *composing in multimedia*” and is currently “moving from writing to digital writing to visual literacies to explorations of design” (ibid, emphasis in the original). And both that characterization of “Writing Studies” and this movement away from “writing” in its traditional form in Composition seems confirmed to Sally by her own experience as a creative writer in Composition and Rhetoric and by her curricular and departmental experiences (just this past semester, her department took up the project of revamping their curriculum to move explicitly more toward digital composition and digital-multimodal rhetorics, or to at least account for these in their courses).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> It is not unimportant to understanding the disorientational complex of Writing Studies that Ball's definitional claims are the *first* lines of the article or that the piece is written by someone who does not identify as a compositionist but as scholar of New Media, who has a doctorate in Rhetoric & Technical Communication, and who has an MFA in Poetry. Further, her position as the editor of *Kairos*, a digital scholarly journal that explicitly

Does what Sally has found here ultimately resolve the problem? No. But it's a start. Having now a more concrete sense of the history of the potential, so to speak, of "Writing Studies" as a field, a name, and a topos of Composition and Rhetoric, and of some of the institutional, disciplinary, and curricular complexity involved in "researching Writing Studies," the question remains: what is Sally—or any Writing Studies scholar like her—to do?

### **3. Attending to Disorientation and Orientation**

#### *3.1 Identifying Disorientation*

In the end, as I have tried to demonstrate through Sally, there is a problem of figuring out identity, place, and in what direction to go in trying to *be* a Writing Studies scholar *in* Writing Studies if "Writing Studies" is nonidentical to "Composition and Rhetoric." Sally is disoriented, unsure of how to find her place and where to go in her work, both as a teacher and a scholar, and her disorientation is clearly entailed with a range of institutional, curricular, and disciplinary issues that precede her and extend far beyond her as an individual. Given her training, her teaching, and her work in the

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positions itself as "exploring the intersections of rhetoric, technology, and pedagogy," the mission of which is "to publish scholarship that examines digital and multimodal composing practices," and which is avowedly oriented to "English Studies," seeking to publish and foreground "scholarly examinations of topics related to technology in English Studies fields," which are, tellingly, constellated as "rhetoric, composition, technical and professional communication, education, creative writing, language and literature," to which "media studies" is significant. Ball's own self-identified location, given her background, is in not Composition *only* but also a "related field." So, the question of whether Ball makes these claims about Writing Studies *as a participant in the field* is of some import because her field-location as a participant implicates Writing Studies as Other or not and implicates her authorial intentions in her introductory claims as orienting or disorienting.

discipline of Composition, she is likely to try to get herself oriented by taking cues, for example, from her past training, the curriculum that she and her colleagues teach, and from prominent publications in Composition and Rhetoric to get a sense of what the field of Writing Studies looks like at the moment and where it is heading. The difficulty Sally will have here—as would any other potential Writing Studies scholar—is that most of what she could look at, concretely, is still in Composition and most often does not draw a significant distinction between the two.

For example, in comparing notes with colleagues at her university and in considering the curricular debates she has heard in department meetings, Sally may note that “Writing Studies,” as represented by her program in “Writing and Rhetoric,” appears to be primarily about developing the abilities of student writers to compose, sometimes directly in writing and sometimes more metaphorically in “writing” (as digital video, for example) based on developed rhetorical knowledge and a critical awareness of genre and process. Next, she may note that all of the articles published in the journals in which she has found “Writing Studies” most often used as a synonym for “Composition and Rhetoric” (*College Composition and Communication*, *JAC*, *College English*, *Composition Studies*, and in any of the less Rhetoric-*qua*-Rhetoric articles in *Rhetoric Review*) tend to be concerned with writing in terms of learning, teaching, classroom practice, and the disciplinary position of Writing Studies-as-Composition-and-Rhetoric in the University relative to things like the role of FYC, pedagogy, and curriculum. However, this shows only a generally pedagogical orientation to *something* being called “writing” in a cluster of terms made relevant to it (or vice versa). And, given her previous



attempts to search for “Writing Studies,” this only makes plain some of the disorienting capacity of using the phrase “Writing Studies” to refer to a potential field distinct from Composition and Rhetoric.

Taking an historical view, she might note that many texts in the canon (both old and new) that deal with the kind of disorientation she is experiencing, on a broader level, exhibit certain traits that seem to connect the cues she is taking from curriculum and journals. She might notice, for example, that the majority of these texts, at some point, tend to grapple with actually defining our “real” subject or even go so far as to suggest that “the limits of composition studies begin with its subject: writing” and that, “in general, composition studies has not taken seriously the conceptual difficulty involved in deciding what writing is in the first place” (Smit 17). And yet these studies typically privilege some specialized form of writing as a focus, whether academic or creative, whether multimodal or pagual, whether in terms of its historical or contemporary relations to Rhetoric, often relative to the role of theory or practice. She may even note that such texts, particularly the ones explicitly concerned with trying either to describe the whole of Writing Studies/Composition and Rhetoric or to right the ship, so to speak, after charting out an historical path to a present confusion about the nature of the discipline, often try to group all the different variations of what might constitute the study of writing under a few core terms and suggest that these appear to be what the study of writing “really” is.

So, instead, what I suggest is this: we look at the abstract instead, at orientation and disorientation itself, though I have used these terms fairly generally. In the end,

however, looking directly at the disorienting, and orienting, potential of “Writing Studies”—and its relation to Sally—requires a more technical depiction.

### *3.2 Identifying Orientation*

Orientation is an oddly under-theorized term, given the ubiquity of its use. We commonly use disorientation to refer to confusion and orientation as its opposite. In describing a disorientation *like* that of Writing Studies, the term is not the opposite of orientation but highlights a particular orientational state of a field and/or its participants: either a lack of a clear and operative orientation to the subject (which we have seen in Writing Studies where that field is non-identical to Composition and Rhetoric) or in which a field and/or its participants accommodate a wide enough range of disparate orientations that it is unclear precisely what the subject is and what the bearing of the whole is toward it because the range of orientations presented are difficult to synthesize without some radically reductionist conception (which we have seen in Writing-Studies-as-Composition-and-Rhetoric).

Next, there is useful information in some of the more specialized uses of the term. I might describe a given scholar as having an identifiably philosophical orientation to writing and writers (Derrida or Burke—both Sean and Kenneth), a rhetorical orientation (Robert Connors or Susan Miller), a genre orientation (Amy Devitt or Anis Bawarshi), or even a Creative Writing Studies orientation (Graeme Harper, Jeri Kroll, or Timothy Mayers) to writing and writers, and so on. And this sense of orientation is at least partially, if not wholly, homologous in structure to the referent of a sexual orientation or

the description of some particular group of students, let's say, as being particularly "grade oriented." They all offer a general identification of what it is that an agent seems to be directed *toward* (writing and writers) and *through* some specifying figure (philosophy, rhetoric, genre, creative writing, sex—whether as a male/female anatomical specifier or as an act—or grades).

In each of these cases, because any field or agent that survives long enough will eventually develop many orientations that coexist in the space of their consciousness, I am likely naming only one of many orientations that might identify, or re-identify, the referent to me or to others. For example, it would be difficult to argue, by reviewing their whole corpus of works, that any of the authors I have listed above could be accurately totalized by a single orientation. How would we be able to argue, for example, that Connors, Corbet, Miller, Devitt, or Bawarshi do not also exhibit a Composition and Rhetoric orientation or that the multitudes of compositionists who work also with poetry and short fiction and actively participate professionally in those fields through their published collections, reviews, and so on (such as Wendy Bishop, Hans Ostrom, or David Starkey) do not also exhibit a Creative Writing orientation?<sup>11</sup> Likewise, we might assume that all of these agents exhibit some form of sexual orientation and many, many others.

Where the sexual orientation of some individual or a student's being observably "grade oriented" *may* differ from the first set is that the philosophy-based, rhetoric-based,

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Fulkerson names additional, and more specialized, examples of some local orientations to writing with his "four philosophies" within Composition: "expressive" (being a writerly-orientation), "mimetic" (being a representational-orientation), "rhetorical" (being a readerly-effects-orientation), and "formalist" (textual-traits-orientation) ("Four Philosophies" 343).

or genre-based orientations, like a Creative Writing or Composition and Rhetoric orientation, all commonly work to identify, also, *from* what “perspective” or “vantage” an agent’s behaviors seem to take place. That is, we could probably assume that a philosophically-oriented compositionist would view various issues concerning writers and writing from an observably “philosophical” position. We could even reasonably assume that such an oriented agent’s work would exhibit concrete signs of this philosophical orientation that would observably differ from the works of differently oriented scholars in the same field. His or her attention to certain questions and topics, the use of certain methods of inquiry, the uptake of certain assumptions about issues would all likely be dependent on the sense that certain philosophical things (questions, topics, methods, etc.) are potentially relevant to what compositionists *do*. Even at a very simple level, for example, we could reasonably expect to see Heidegger pop up in a philosophically-oriented compositionist’s works cited pages as often as any particular Rhet-Comp scholar.

And this differs somewhat from “disciplinary identity.” In the case of the philosophically-oriented Composition scholar, his or her disciplinary identity describes the reified disciplinary position that person occupies (scholar in Composition). That same scholar’s orientation, on the other hand, describes her (philosophical) bent, her bearing as a person with a disciplinary identity. The two are, of course, highly interrelated, as a Composition orientation is *implicit* in the disciplinary identity of a scholar of Composition and the particular nature of his or her orientational complex is both what has

likely directed that person to *become* a scholar of Composition in the first place and what is *manifest* in the particular nature of that person's *behaviors* as a compositionist.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.3 "Linking" Orientation and Disorientation

What is particularly important to this penultimate sense of orientation I am here forwarding to address the disorientation of Writing Studies and its potential participants is this combination of towardness and fromness, of identification and vantage, of all of these and the actual practice and experience of agents. Orientation (and, for that matter, disorientation) operates here as both a *thing* in the field and a *force* acting upon people under its influence, motivating our behaviors, directing our actions, conditioning the nature of our specialized attentions. In this way, the orientation and disorientation of Writing Studies as a field and identifier of agents is linked to Kenneth Burke's somewhat different conceptions of orientation, which are relatively scattered throughout his writings, often appearing by different names and through disparate discussions, though orientation was one of the chief concerns of his early work.<sup>13</sup>

In general, Burke's formulation of orientation in *Permanence and Change*, his most direct work with the term, is: a "model of the universe" (118); "how meanings take

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<sup>12</sup> This relationship between orientation and disciplinary identity is further discussed below, but, for a more detailed discussion of identity, please see Chapter 3, and for further discussion of the relations between disciplinary and field-oriented identifications, please see Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>13</sup> It may be tempting to include "terministic screens" as one of Burke's many names for orientation and disorientation—but these do not have quite the same referent. Orientations and terministic screens are intimately related, but the functions of orientations are somewhat larger in range and scope. Please see below for a brief discussion in the present context, but both their relationship and the tendency to reduce orientational (and field) functions down to language represent significant problems that are addressed in detail in Chapters 3 and 5.

form” (lix); a “general view of reality” (4), a cognitive/mental “scheme” about a “kind of effort and ambition” that interferes with agents’ ability to “see serious possibilities in any other system of production and distribution,” and a “theory of causal relationships” related to the “selection of means” (7). This is both a macro-level conception, on par with Burkean Motive, and a constitutive feature of individual experience. According to Blankenship, Murphy, and Rosenwasser, “An individual’s Orientation is his way of looking at the world,” defined by the presence of a:

“bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they must be,” “a sense of relationships, developed by the contingencies of experience,” “a schema of serviceability,” a system of “new meanings,” and an “interpretative attitude.” (4)

As a set of judgments about “how things were, how they are, and how they *must* be,” orientation has direct and directive effects on our experiences and practices and implicates political and self-interested motives. Further,

An Orientation either trains or incapacitates us. It helps us interpret our interpretations, permits us to test experiences by serving as a criterion of service and disservice, allows us to verbalize our oughts and ought-nots, to praise and blame, and lets us get at our motives . . . (Blankenship, Murphy, and Rosenwasser 5)

That is, an orientation provides the tools with which we might, for example, advocate for one dominant perspective over another but also the mechanism by which we would question that perspective and our motivations in forwarding it in the first place.

Finally, all orientations, for Burke, involve “the process of linkage” (11) and are related to “means selection”—whereby “savages could make fires by considering dry wood and friction as appropriate linkages in the process of fire-making” (9)—Burke’s version of *effective* means selection or causation via orientation. And, “because their

Christian missionary and doctor wore a rain coat during storms, they linked rain coats with rainy weather, and accordingly begged him to don the rain coat as a medicine against draught”—Burke’s version of a result from an *ineffective* orientation, “a faulty theory of causal relationships” that directly results in “faulty selection of means”—or, a version of what I would identify as a common and practical outcome of the difficulty of acting from a position of disorientation.

And, because a potential Writing Studies agent (like Sally) would likely already have a disciplinary identity, and through it, would contend with the “linkage,” in Burke’s terminology, of the potential orientation of Writing Studies and disciplinary training as a compositionist, that agent will likely encounter what Burke calls “trained incapacity.” This connection between orientation and linkage extended to “Training” and “Trained Incapacity” is paramount because orientations are partly developed through past experiences and knowledge acquired previously to account for how things work. So, having a sense of how Composition and Rhetoric *works* is part of the defining orientation of the compositionist, and having a sense of how the field Writing Studies *works* would be a necessary part of *being* a Writing Studies agent *differently*, despite (or even as a result of) most likely being trained as a compositionist. The trick is that “one adopts measures in keeping with his past training,” Burke writes, and the very soundness of this training may lead him to adopt the wrong measures” (10). If we adopt measures in keeping with our past disciplinary training in Composition and Rhetoric, we will likely not see Writing Studies as anything other than a synonym, as “linked” with Composition

and Rhetoric. Not doing so, however, presents a situation that is practically different from doing and being a compositionist. Burke's example is a bit Pavlovian but still serves:

If the chickens, by their scheme of orientation, respond to the ringing of a bell as a food-sign, and if the experiment has this time changed the rules, so that the bell is in reality a precursor to punishment . . . their past training has caused them to misjudge their present situation. Their training has become an incapacity. (10)

So, what if experimenting with the emergence of the potential field and orientation of Writing Studies represents a similar (though not punitive, of course) changing of the rules?

In the examples I first provided, a philosophical orientation to writing and writers includes also the sense of a philosophical world-view, attitude, and a sense of causal relations that are specifically philosophically grounded. And this is *why* a scholar disciplined in Composition would likely adopt means of studying and understanding writing through the disciplinary identifications of Composition with a "scheme of orientation" that posits writing as a potentially philosophical problem. Likewise, a Composition and Rhetoric orientation enables agents, to adopt a "bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they must be," among other things, in the "universe" of Composition and Rhetoric and an "interpretive attitude" toward phenomena in that universe. A Rhetoric and Composition orientation provides a means of *being* a Rhetoric and Composition agent and understanding (and delimiting) the universe, the field that is, in which that orientational complex operates as an orienting force. A Writing Studies orientation, likewise, would, and would need to, do the same.



### 3.4 *In the End(s and Means), It's All Positives and Negatives*

With these more technical senses of orientation and disorientation in mind, what I have actually suggested by claiming that Writing Studies is disoriented and disorienting is that it does not yet provide a distinct (from Composition and Rhetoric) and motivating attitude, world view, and set of linked relations that *effectively* direct our attentions, that we are not entirely sure of where we are coming *from* or headed *toward* in the study of writing, of exactly what we are facing, or precisely how to look at things—or each other. However, to specify further, I identify two distinct disorientational types as being of concern in this context—positive and negative.

In the “Sally demonstration” with which I began, negative disorientation and positive disorientation are both *the* problem. Sally is a compositionist and creative writer, disciplined in the English department and further so in her teaching in a freestanding Rhetoric and Writing program. She wants to be a Writing Studies agent at work in the field of Writing Studies, but, if we accept the possibility that Writing Studies might name something non-identical to Composition and Rhetoric, we are confronted with a *negative* disorientation for Writing Studies as a field and for Sally as a participant. I mean here simply a lack, an absence of an available orientation as defined above that we could identify as specifically and operatively that of Writing Studies and its agents. Sally has no way to fully “get oriented” as a Writing Studies agent because the field and its orientation are still more potential than actual. So, in this case, addressing disorientation requires first identifying the presence of the negative, to trope Burke once further, the absence of an

extant and operative orientation through which to work, and then working to develop one—in this case, a Writing Studies orientation.

By contrast, in Composition and Rhetoric we have a *positive* disorientation, which is much closer to the colloquial sense of the term as referring to a confusion. In this more technical sense, however, a positive disorientation is a kind of field-level con-fusion similar to what John Muckelbauer has described as a “generative and reciprocal fusion of body and place” (136), of the sticking together of things in and as place. Positive disorientation is a state in which many extant and operative orientations as I have defined the term coexist in the same field such that it becomes difficult to accurately totalize them as a group, without being reductive, as *the* orientation *of* (and, by synecdoche, *as*) a field. A positive disorientation requires very different redress and is, in many ways, more difficult because it requires us to entirely *jettison the idea that our disorientation a problem*. In this case, Composition and Rhetoric is disoriented because it has been so wildly successful—drawing in and accommodating many different orientations under its unique umbrella (within its field, that is).

The real work, then, of addressing the disorientation of Writing Studies in figuring out how to be a Writing Studies agent and work in the field of Writing Studies is looking at the whole disorientational complex in which a Writing Studies field and orientation might emerge. For Sally and anyone like her, the (dis)orienting situation of trying to be a Writing Studies scholar in the field of Writing Studies is both positive *and* negative. If we accept the proposition that Writing Studies is a potential field, emergent but distinct *from* Composition and Rhetoric, “getting oriented” requires attention both to

the lack of an operative and specific Writing Studies orientation capable of directing our attitudes, experiences, and behaviors as Writing Studies agents *and* the positive disorientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric in which we would likely find ourselves drawn to Writing Studies as a potential field in the first place.

So, what I suggest is that we make orientation and disorientation an explicit concern in both Composition and Writing Studies and seek to understand them more thoroughly, directing our attention to them and making our particular orientations and disorientations, themselves, explicit—in order to “get (re)oriented” to Writing Studies. Explicitly focusing on our orientations and disorientations enables us to gain better footing, to become better oriented and to proceed on firmer ground. And the ground is, as yet, unstable.

## CHAPTER TWO

*Attending to Disorientation Beyond the Individual Agent:  
From Analyzing to Enacting Writing Studies*

Hence, ideas as such are worthless in literature until given the concrete embodiment of  
“enactment.”

— Peter Barry, from *Beginning Theory*, 1995

I have so far offered a basic examination of the orientational and disorientational capacity of Writing Studies as a *potential* more than an *actual* field, and of that (dis)orientational complex as a pragmatic problem of agents' experience and practice. Further, I have suggested making orientation and disorientation explicit concerns and that doing so in the potential field of Writing Studies, specifically, requires an entailed treatment of both negative disorientation (in which a field and/or agent may be observed to lack a clear and operative orientation) and positive disorientation (in which a field and/or agent may be observed to accommodate a wide enough range of disparate orientations that it is unclear precisely what the subject is and what the bearing of the whole is toward it). However, in my initial assessment, I concentrated primarily on this (dis)orientational complex at the level of the individual agent wanting to "get oriented" in Writing Studies, which is only a first step, because an individual's (dis)orientation is always-already entailed with that of the field(s) in which that individual operates and experiences phenomena. What I want to do here, then, is to examine some of the ways in which field-based (dis)orientation is manifest on a broader disciplinary, institutional, and curricular level and how it tends to be addressed in our discourse. In doing so, I aim to a) demonstrate some ways of concretely observing the disorienting of Writing Studies from within a disoriented Composition and Rhetoric, and to b) critique the traditional method in Composition (and elsewhere) of addressing broader levels of disorientation and offer an alternative route along which to proceed.

## 1. Looking for (Dis)orientation Beyond the Individual Agent

In a disorientational complex that is both positive and negative, it is best to begin with presence and move toward the absence. Because I am concerned primarily with the potential of an emergent Writing Studies field and orientation coming *from* Composition's positive disorientation, our first task should be to examine some of the concrete manifestations of this disorientational complex *in* the latter. The first trick of examining a disorientational or orientational complex in a highly successful field, however, is knowing where to look—which is generally not in an overview of the standard debates in that field but in the ways in which disciplinary, institutional, and curricular structures (and their agents) anticipate and attempt to address disorientation and orientation directly.

So, in sussing out the positive disorientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric entailed with both the negative and positive disorientations of Writing Studies, we need look no farther than one of our flagship journals, *College Composition and Communication*.<sup>1</sup> However, rather than offering a survey of *CCC* articles to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> Flagship journals, like *CCC*, are useful in understanding a field's (dis)orientational complex specifically because they can act as something like poster-children for the fields they work to represent as institutional structures. However, to clarify, what matters in looking at flagship journals is not in identifying one journal as “more flagship” than another. *CCC*, for example, has the highest circulation of any major scholarly journal in Composition, but this is beside the point. It is the (dis)orientational functions (particularly, the introductory functions) of *CCC* and that which shows up in its pages that are useful. Specifically from an orientationalist perspective, what matters most is the relation *between* such journals' capacity for representation/demonstration and the function of the flagship metaphor, which is dependent on a journal's being conceived in some way as one of the leaders, as one of those that are metaphorically “first” in the fleet,

(dis)orientational complex it reveals and suggests (which all too easily rehearses the strategy of identifying “the big debates,” which I have already suggested enables a confusion of the broad manifestations of disorientation with attention to disorientation itself), I can demonstrate this function more effectively by looking at two recent initiatives that have appeared in its pages.

### *1.1 On (Dis)orientation and Curricular Naming*

First, for a relatively simple example: Deborah Balzhiser and Susan McLeod’s 2010 *CCC* essay responds to a call by the Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition, established only five years earlier, to identify and describe the “prototypical” Rhet-Comp major in the University.<sup>2</sup> Their findings and their discussions

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metaphorically biggest, “fastest, most heavily armed or best known” (Vardi and Vianu 5). And, of course, *CCC* is one of several journals we might identify as flagships in this sense (along with, for example, *JAC*, *Composition Studies*, *Computers and Composition*, among others) and so can function specifically as a positively (dis)orienting force. This is not because the journal can (or even necessarily attempts to) represent the whole of the field but because its uptake *as* a flagship enables a general acceptance that it partially demonstrates but does not totalize for us what the field looks like at a given moment and where it might be headed in the future (i.e., the field’s general orientation: *where* we are, in what *direction* we face, and the way we *experience* phenomena, the *way we look at* things, given our particular vantage in academic/discursive spaces and places). Therefore, what and how *CCC* introduces will reveal a demonstrative (though, not necessarily fully representative) orientation of the field in which it is accepted as a flagship and suggests the (dis)orientational complex it anticipates amongst its readers—that is, us.

<sup>2</sup> Manifestations of this particular orientational concern seem to be on the rise. For example, a collection edited by Gregory Giberson, Jim Nugent, and Lori Ostergaard was just published, *Writing Majors: Eighteen Program Profiles*, which Sandra Jamieson predicts “will quickly become an essential resource for writing studies,” specifically because the major is “rapidly growing” and because the collection “provides a snapshot of where the field of writing studies is and suggests where it is going and what it might become” (vii). That is, the collection and the majors discussed have value as providing a

should not only be compelling within Composition but to anyone seeking to understand the disorientation of Writing Studies. “Let us provide two quick observations,” they say:

First, although the committee charge asked us to find one, there is no prototypical major. . . . Second, although the name of our committee is “The Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition,” few of our undergraduate majors have that title. Although our graduate programs usually call themselves “rhetoric and composition,” our major is most often called simply a major in writing, or professional writing, as distinct from creative writing. This makes sense, of course. Potential majors coming to college as first-year students would probably not have heard of something called “rhetoric and composition” in high school; “writing” is a more familiar term, one we use in this essay. But the terminology raises the interesting issue of our identity as a field of study: we now have graduate programs that are called one thing (mostly rhetoric and composition) and an undergraduate major that is called something else (mostly writing). (417)

Several orientational issues are raised here, but the most demonstrative question asked is about coherence—in this case, coherence achieved (or not) through the identificatory potential of disparate names given to our undergraduate and graduate curricula. The names given to curricula and institutional components will always be an orientational issue,<sup>3</sup> and any broad-scale instance of confusion about how best to name them should be taken as potential evidence of a (dis)orientational complex.

If we were to allow that Composition and Rhetoric *is* Writing Studies, or at least that it is the extant discipline best institutionally positioned to step into the space of that

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specifically *orientational* snapshot of the field. However, again, “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric” are most often used interchangeably throughout the collection.

<sup>3</sup> This is demonstrated below in terms of the naming of Composition in institutional and curricular contexts, but there is also a significant political dimension to be addressed. Please see Chapter 3 for details, specifically in terms of the nomination of subjects in/as Composition and/or Writing Studies.



name,<sup>4</sup> a series of disorienting difficulties would immediately arise. Working backward, graduate programs in Rhet-Comp are mostly *not* named Writing Studies. And for good reason. A curricular program intended to “get students oriented” in(to) a field (Rhetoric and Composition, in this case), as virtually all graduate programs in American universities are intended to do, necessarily works to orient its students to the subject of the field and its disciplinary systems through study of and training in a disciplinary epistemology and identity with which we assume potential graduate students are already at least relatively familiar (otherwise, they would most likely not be applying in the first place). Undergraduate programs, on the other hand, tend *to* name themselves as “something else (mostly writing)” because “potential majors coming in as college first-year students would probably not have heard of something called ‘rhetoric and composition’ in high school; ‘writing’ is a more familiar term . . .” The assumption would be, that is, that uninitiated students would likely experience a projectively negative disorientation (an orientational absence) when presented with a major named “Rhetoric and Composition” because they would not likely know toward what subject they would be directing their attention and through what means.

Complicating matters further, a major in “writing” is necessarily differentiated not from “composition” but from “creative writing,” not entirely dissimilar to the necessitation of differentiating between “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric.” In reality, of course, in-coming first-year college students in the United States often do *not* have a total ignorance of the term “composition” as distinct from “creative

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<sup>4</sup> Please see the previous chapter, particularly “Section II: ‘Getting Oriented’ to the Potential Field of Writing Studies (Or, The Actual History of a Potential).”

writing,” as my own and many others’ experience teaching public high school courses in “composition” (meaning, reductively, “argumentation and essay-writing in academic settings”)—alongside the regularly taken AP English course and exam in “Language and Composition”—should easily refute any claims to the contrary. Instead, the anticipated problem of linkage in curricular identification arises because we anticipate the possibility of “writing,” for those uninitiated in Composition and Rhetoric, to more readily refer to systems and types of composing that are not at the center of what we tend to study in Rhet-Comp. Consider for example Jessie Moore, Tim Peeples, Rebecca Pope-Ruark, and Paula Rosinski’s recent discussion of the development of a “writing” major offered by the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at Elon University between 1998 and 2000. The authors report that the “concentration was significantly reframed to” move focus away from “composition (e.g., tutoring and the development of writers)” and to, instead, “appeal to a wider group of undergraduates,” driven by what the faculty “had learned about undergraduate student interest at Elon and by a sense of the broader discipline of rhetoric and writing as much more than ‘composition.’ Most first- and second-year students could see themselves doing—and were attracted to the idea of doing—something related to writing in the world, but few were thinking they would go on to get a master’s degree in composition and teach writing” (230).

So, as curricular naming serves a specifically orientational function, acknowledgements of the potential of such responses to and actions taken in relation to the name of the major are demonstrative, whether acknowledged discursively by individual scholars or institutionally by the programs actually naming the major at their

respective universities. In both cases, we see evidence of anticipation (by, for example, Balzhiser and McLeod and the institutions considered in their study) of a disorientational complex at work, anticipating both negative disorientation (“what is that major; from what position and at what subject would I be looking in that major’s curriculum”) and positive disorientation (“so, that major is a course of study in creative writing, and X, and Y, and ?”) on the part of potential undergraduate participants.

Later on in the article, Balzhiser and McLeod again raise the issue of naming, this time in their conclusion as one of the central issues of coherence, of “coming to consensus” about and in getting oriented to our developing major. “What’s in a name?” they ask:

We noted above that our graduate programs are generally titled something that involves the words “rhetoric” and “composition” in some combination, while our undergraduate majors prefer the term “writing” in their titles. Although this may not matter, it does raise the issue of how, exactly, we identify ourselves to others. “Writing” to the general public usually connotes creative writing, while “composition” as a Library of Congress search term will take you to books and articles about music. Perhaps we should think about some consistency in naming ourselves and our programs—something like “rhetoric and writing studies.” (429)

So, what I suggest is simply that the disparity in our curricular naming practices matters because it is evidence of an orientational problematic being engaged and manifest on the level of both discourse and institutionalized curriculum. We seem to be, in this sense, assuming a *mostly* negative disorientation on the part of undergraduates and *mostly* positive disorientation (or simply *an* orientation) on the part of graduate students to Composition and Rhetoric.

After all, the uninitiated (the negatively disoriented) are more likely to think of “creative writing” when confronted with a course of study in “writing,” but, presumably,

graduate students are less so. It is a problem of identity—in the sense that having multiple names by which we identify ourselves and our curriculum may cause some disorientation all on its own, though not in the sense that this necessarily suggests in any meaningful way an identity crisis in the wider field for scholars. The call to action that we should consider “some consistency in naming ourselves and our programs” is significant, then, primarily because it anticipates that it would be to our *benefit* (or, at least, in our political and disciplinary interest) to use a consistent title to accomplish something that a proliferation of variable titles does not. It makes us and our curriculum more easily identifiable, easier to “get oriented” to (and easier to institutionally empower), and the presence of this concern in the first place points to the disorienting potential of our curricular names.

### *1.2 On (Dis)orientation and Introducing Poster Children*

In the previous example, I discussed the (dis)orientational issues at stake in curricular naming primarily in terms of “identity” and “coherence.” But another name for the system at work there would be “introduction.” A major’s name introduces the curriculum to be offered, and, in one way or another, all introductions serve an orientational function. To see this demonstrated more explicitly, and in much more complex form, consider another example: the *College Composition and Communication*

poster collection, which provides another demonstration of a field-level attempt to address disorientation specifically through introductory functions.<sup>5</sup>

This introductory project by *CCC* demonstratively anticipates that Composition and Rhetoric is both *disorienting* (through the posters themselves as a series of introductions) and *disoriented* (through the introduction *to* the series). As the driving force behind the project and the journal's editor at the time, Kathleen Blake Yancey explained at the initiative's outset that the series was "intended for our various publics—students, colleagues, administrators, and the public at large" ("Another Beginning" 408). And what is *behind* this orientational endeavor, much like any other introduction, is the anticipation of disorientation in the target audience.

At the time of this writing, the journal had published nearly twenty poster pages explaining a particular concept in Composition and Rhetoric for use by the journal's readership (that is, by participants already acting and oriented in Comp-Rhet) in our discussions with others on what we are about in the study of writing. Each aims to present "a text for talk that we can use with students, of course, but also with colleagues, administrators, and the public at large" through the presentation of core concepts in field (*ibid*). That is, the poster series is an attempt to provide orientational redress for those with a likely *negative* disorientation—a likely undeveloped orientation that does not effectively produce a clear and directive view of the field, like for most students and the

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<sup>5</sup> To clarify, I do not suggest that the selection of the poster genre, itself, is necessarily significant—only that the series, as described by Yancey, is directly presented as an attempt to address disorientation among Composition's various publics and so provides another demonstration of the orientational and disorientational functions under discussion.

public at large—as well as for those with a likely *positive* disorientation, in which the span of different extant orientations already at work in the field makes it difficult to identify *the* orientation of the field, as is often the case with many compositionists and others in the Academy. In response, the series aims to orient its target audience toward a version of what Composition and Rhetoric is (as a field defined, at least to a degree, by the aggregate of terms presented in the series—Rhetorical Situation, Rhetoric, Composition, Literacy/Literacies, and so on) and of what it does (it studies these concepts and concepts like them).

Observing, then, that she is certainly not “the first to note that we don’t connect with the public as we might,” the poster series is presented as being intended to introduce Composition to its “various publics” in a way that is easily accessible. And, wherever we note that we are not connecting with our audience and anticipate the need for ease of access in discourse, we anticipate the likelihood of disorientation. So, we should understand the poster series as being responsive to a (dis)orientational complex in which we are attempting to make clear our field’s orientation to a potentially disoriented public in order to help them “get oriented.”

For a quick example, see the “Composition” poster published early on the series, which opens with a definition of the term as an act, “to compose is to create,” which immediately follows this definition with a series of composer/creator-types juxtaposed against “writers” (as a sub-class of composers/creators), and which then provides a brief definition of Composition as a field in the business of developing and using models of composing in relation to “adults and students.” Defined as the development of models of

composing, the poster then claims that the term's "importance to the field" of compositional modeling is defined a) through its capacity to enable "teachers" to "shift from teaching writing through the analysis of others' texts to teaching writing through engaging students in composing itself" and b) its potential for enabling the accommodations of multi-modal forms of composing specifically relative to digitality.<sup>6</sup> So, from this, we get a "text for talk," as Yancey says, with which to get students and others oriented to the field as that place in which models of creation are produced and studied in order to specifically enable teachers of "writing" (whether understood traditionally as written-linguistic text or as a metaphor for digitally multi-modal materials, and so broadening the sense of "composition" beyond the "writing of academic papers") to take a certain kind of action: to teach students "composing itself" in both digital and non-digital arenas. What ends the poster is a list of "resources," scholarly articles from compositionists, which appear to be presented as available texts with which to get *further* oriented to a "composition" so defined, though it is worth noting that none of the sources presented stray far from "writing" in its traditional form (despite "composition" *not* being "writing" but "creation"), from students, or from teachers. The broader sense of "composing" forwarded in the rest of the poster does not appear to extend, orientationally speaking, to the "field of research" presented in the resource list to which the target audience is directed, which seems not at all innocuous, given my attempt

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<sup>6</sup> I do not mean to take issue with the emphasis on "modeling" in this analysis. My concern here is only with the demonstrative ways that the terminological complex in the argument presented by the poster belies a highly structured and demonstrative complexity at stake in defining even the most basic terms of engagement.

to parse out the (dis)orientational relationships between Composition and Rhetoric and Writing Studies.

Tellingly, the first term posterized for public consumption is “Rhetorical Situation,” followed by “Rhetoric,” followed by “Composition.” That “Rhetoric” and then “Composition” should appear among the first three terms is no surprise given that the two comprise the very name of the discipline, but that “Rhetorical Situation,” rather than “Writing” should come absolutely first is not insignificant. They are in an order, an order that was arrived at in editorial discussion, and that order provides an unavoidable interpretive possibility (whether right or wrong) concerning the hierarchy of terms, regardless of any discussion we might assume the editors had about intention in that ordering. It would not, for example, be a totally unreasonable assumption that, coming first, these are perhaps being presented as the three *most* important, *most* central terms in the field at the time. Composition is that field whose study is of the rhetorical situation, of composition, and of rhetoric—as well as an arrangement of other terms/concepts that *extend* from these three most basic, most core terminisms.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In an email regarding the ordering of terms, Yancey did report that, while she “didn’t always use the same logic, sometimes going with a term that seemed to complement the contents of an issue, sometimes choosing a term that was significantly different than the term in the previous issue . . . [i]n the case of the first term, rhetorical situation, [she] saw it as a governing term and so a good one to lead with.” So, while we may not be able to argue for *consistency* in intention, the characterization of the first term presented in the series, “rhetorical situation,” as a “governing term and so a good one to lead with” would seem to support the idea that at least *some* consideration based on primacy was present at the beginning. However, again, I am only observing a reasonable interpretive possibility implicit in the suggestions of primacy the ordering may make for audiences, independent of editorial intent, and that this is (dis)orientationally significant as a demonstration.



Of course, this does not, in itself, speak to Composition's disorientation. However, of the nearly twenty published at the time of this research, no poster page on "writing" had yet appeared (nor would it, in the end). And, in presenting the collection to a group of students and others as was Yancey's stated intention, it would be difficult to argue, based on the constellation of selected terms by one of the discipline's flagship journals as representative data, that Composition and Rhetoric is a field whose subject is "writing" without taking the additional discursive step of defining "composition" as "writing," which even the "composition" poster itself does not do. Instead, the poster presents "composition" as "creation" and claims only that writing is a *kind* of composition. A reasonable outsider would have to be forgiven for suspecting that, based on the idea that the poster series presents a series of core terms necessary for a basic understanding of the field, that "writing" must not be a *core* term/concept in Composition and Rhetoric—that we *may* study "writing" but that it is not our *central* subject of inquiry as "writing" does not even fall into a list of the key concepts we need to explain to help a disoriented public "get oriented."

What might counter this suspicion is noting that the posters, in every case and without fail, all *mention* writing, and they all talk about writers, researchers, or teachers of writing relative to whatever term is being discussed. So, I would suggest that what the poster series most significantly presents is not the core *terms* of Composition and Rhetoric but a series of core *orientations* in Composition and Rhetoric *relative* to writing in some way, which may be presented in order to get our various publics oriented in(to) the field. We might, then, understand the entire project, at least on one level, as

addressing a *negative* disorientation toward the field of “Composition and Rhetoric” by specifically introducing a *positive* disorientation to “writing.”

### *1.3 On Introduction as (Dis)orientation and Introducing Composition and Rhetoric*

Beyond the content of poster series itself, it is useful also to note the introductory staging of the project (literally, Yancey’s introduction in 2009 when the series began). What is especially interesting in this piece is the way in which it demonstrates both anticipation of disorientation on the part of *multiple* audiences and takes direct orientational redress beyond curricular naming.

If we want to observe orientation and disorientation in figuring out a (dis)orientational complex, looking at the orientational patterns of agents’ introductory practice is an excellent stop on the road because the exact purpose of a document’s introduction, at least in any scholarly genre I can think of, is to orient (or, in some cases, to disorient and *then* orient) the audience in and to the “field of the text,” so to speak. Consider the standard introductory practice in most academic articles in the humanities. We can observe an agent’s anticipation of, for example, a *positive* disorientational complex in the topical identification and provision of an anecdote or brief review of literature designed:

- a) to help the target reader find his or her footing in the article;
- b) to identify the writer’s general orientation to the subject of the piece (introductions via a genre-theory orientation emphasizing the social-rhetorical

function of introductory acts versus a Ciceronian orientation emphasizing introductions as part of Arrangement, for example); and

c) to position that author's argument comfortably in the field relative to other arguments with which the audience is likely already familiar, which is necessitated primarily by the anticipation of a positive (dis)orientational complex in the target audience.

The use of this formula by an author anticipates the reader's being conscious of

a) many possible forms of the subject under discussion already extant and operative in the field (FYC as a service course, a course in skills and literacies, FYC as a reductive identifier of the field of Composition and Rhetoric, FYC as a course in rhetorically grounded discursive practice/theory, etc.);

b) many already extant and operative orientations in the field that could specify the approach to that topic (the genre theory orientation to FYC, the Bizzellian "alt-dis" and critical pedagogy orientation to FYC, the service-learning orientation to FYC, the (post)process orientation to FYC, etc.); and

c) many already extant lines of argument that set the context for a new argument about that topic in the field such that the new argument may be oriented to as being idiosyncratic *enough* to the field that it appears relevant but not so idiosyncratic to the individual author that a field-placement for it cannot be readily imagined by the reader.

For example, Balzhiser and Mcleod's essay—published in the same issue as the introduction of the poster series—begins with a citation from Yancey's landmark "Made

Not Only in Words” 2004 CCCC Chair’s Address to set a specialized orientation to the topical focus (the Writing Major), oriented by Yancey’s having spoken “about the state of our field, urging us to rethink composition as an activity and as a field of study” (415). Of course, the contextualizing narrative that follows<sup>8</sup> does not suggest but by narrative juxtaposition that Yancey’s speech and the developed committee are related. A reasonable question would then be: why begin with Yancey’s speech at all? Because any Comp-Rhet participant would likely recognize a reference to that text immediately and draw orientational information from that reference with which to narrow the field of possible orientations to the subject of the Writing Major and direct his or her attention to what follows along that less diffuse line—to know toward what we are facing, from what position, and in what way.

Certainly, given a Composition and Rhetoric orientation that advantages rhetorical genre theory, a possible counterargument here would be that this pattern is simply a generic feature of academic discourse or a typified rhetorical response to a recurrent situation (of introducing an argument to a scholarly audience in certain discourse communities), vis-à-vis, Carolyn Miller and her followers. I do not disagree, but this is not really a counter as the one does not preclude the other. The generic development of scholarly introductions is both a generic function and also yet another concrete manifestation of disorientation and orientation themselves in fields (including but in no way exclusive to Writing Studies or Composition). These typified rhetorical

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<sup>8</sup> “[S]hortly thereafter, the CCCC Executive Committee constituted the Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition and charged it with the task of documenting the variety of majors in composition as well as identifying and describing prototypic majors and how they were developed,” they write.

maneuvers emerge specifically because writers, over time, anticipate the possibility of disorientation on the part of their readers and take steps that become typified in the address of that possible disorientation, such that orientation and disorientation are, themselves, generic. The anticipation of disorientation calling for orientational redress *is* the generic feature of modern scholarly introduction.<sup>9</sup>

Alternatively, we see a disorient-then-orient strategy employed, most often, when an author assumes the target audience to have already a coherent orientation to a given subject and in which the persuasive potential of that author's argument is predicated on actively producing a certain amount of *dis*orientation to that subject (whether "positive" or "negative"). Given that the "we" of Composition and Rhetoric often refers to "educators" (vis-à-vis, Yancey's introduction to the poster series—see below), I think of the many times I have seen this (dis)orientational strategy used by colleagues or by my own writing instructors (or used it myself as a teacher) to convince a student that, for example, claims he or she makes in an essay require considerably more research or further logical explanation than has been provided, given his or her assumption that the audience will accept the claim without counterargument when this is not the case. The assumption by the student-author that his or her underdeveloped or under-researched

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<sup>9</sup> The generic anticipation of disorientation as calling for orientational address is, of course, part of a larger and systemic anticipation of the kind Walter Ong famously developed in "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction." As he writes, "It may be, of course, that at one time or another," a writer (in his example, a novelist) "imagines himself addressing one or another real person. But not all his readers in their particularities. Practically speaking, of course, . . . he does have to take into consideration the real social, economic, and psychological state of possible readers" (10), and, in this case, the expectation of disorientation is just such a "tak[ing] into consideration" of, particularly, the "psychological state of possible readers."

claims will be accepted by the target audience without challenge manifests an underdeveloped orientation to the subject of those claims (“what do you mean there are many different and even opposing perspectives about the medicinal value of marijuana readily accepted by scholars?”). And the instructor’s intention is to positively disorient the student-author accordingly (“well, sure—let’s take a look at what researchers of glaucoma say about that and compare it to what researchers of public health policy say about it, and then compare both to what researchers of gerontology say about that,” and so on) in order to help that student-author arrive at a more fully developed orientation to the subject and to the positive disorientational complex, and the “big debates” manifesting that complex, that he or she needs to anticipate in composing the document persuasively for the target audience.

Likewise, in the same issue of *CCC* again, we see a version of this strategy employed by Ian Barnard in “The Ruse of Clarity.” Barnard opens by identifying his topical subject (clarity in writing), and then quickly explicates a (dis)orientational complex. First, he identifies ways in which positive disorientations to that subject, through a variety of its generally uncontested virtues, are:

routinely expounded or assumed in composition handbooks, rubrics used to evaluate student writing, the everyday informal interactions of writing instructors with their students and with each other, the stated philosophies of many college composition programs in the United States. (434)

Next, he identifies a set of negative disorientations to that subject on the part of the field and its participants (“I take issue with the reigning taken-for-grantedness of clarity’s virtues by analyzing the ways in which assumptions about clarity’s obviousness, objectivity, and innocuousness in fact conceal the ideological work that is done in the

name of clarity”). He then suggests, essentially, that our overly comfortable orientation to clarity in general has allowed us to take a range of actions and engage in a variety of practices without rigorously interrogating what the concept driving those practices *means* exactly (436) and then attempts throughout the body of essay to *re-orient* us toward that subject, armed with the apparati he develops therein.<sup>10</sup>

Returning to Yancey, and taking apart her introduction from an orientationalist perspective, the disorientational complex and orientational moves are easy enough to identify, once we target disorientation and orientation as an analytical focus. So, a little close reading, with an orientationalist bent, will show how this works.

After identifying connection to Composition’s various publics as the exigency for the poster series, Yancey strategically totalizes the communal orientation of the audience (what we are, where we are, and what we are or should be looking at) and the anticipated disorientation to be addressed, which are two-fold, one for the eventual target audience of the posters and one for an audience of compositionists who would presumably be actually using those posters as “texts for talk”:

As educators, we have as a purpose teaching, and as educators in the twenty-first century, we increasingly have as a purpose connecting to the public at large so that they understand both what composing is not—a synonym for grammar or syntax, or the product of reading—as well as what writing is: an exercise in rhetorical situation using the affordances of a particular medium to speak with confidence and appropriate authority to a given audience on a specific topic. (408-09)

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<sup>10</sup> For another, and more canonic, example of this strategy employed in scholarly discourse, consider Bitzer’s 1968 “The Rhetorical Situation,” in which the persuasiveness of his codification of the rhetorical situation in the body of the article is partially dependent on his convincing the audience that their relatively comfortable orientation to the term “Rhetorical Situation” is problematic and in need of *reorientation* by recourse to his theory of it.

Here, we have an identification of the nature of a compositionist (what we are) in line with the journal's pedagogically-oriented focus: educators. This can either be read as an acceptance and forwarding of the commonplace argument that "Composition means Teaching"—beginning with an assumption that the audience is oriented comfortably by this identification—or as an anticipation of positive disorientation on the part of the audience—beginning with the assumption that compositionists will equally accept many different versions of what we are and that simply providing one of these (educators) as the place from which to get oriented to the rest of the argument is sufficient.

Next, establishing that place as located in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (where we are), she offers a careful definitional sequence in a kind of field-definitional prolepsis that is analogous to the introductory strategy of the lit review in academic articles in which the writer attempts to cue the reader to some particular orientation toward the topic under discussion and place the argument relative to other already extant arguments in the field. In this sequence, we should first note the careful use of "composing" juxtaposed against the implicit historical "service" model of Composition ("a synonym for grammar or syntax"), as grammarians in the service of an academy alarmed by the seeming lack of written-linguistic sophistication in its student populace. We should next note the dismissal of composing as "the product of reading," which doubly implicates both the question of Composition as only a product-oriented concern and the role of reading/literacy in composing, which, as a dismissal, might be read as saying "composition via Composition is not *just* this." Next, there is the conspicuous subsequential use of the term "writing" in tandem with "rhetorical situation" and



“medium,” rather than “language”/“discourse” or “written text” in order to identify the current subject of the field as a rhetorically-informed approach to composing that is not restricted to the inscription of verbal language, which neatly provides space for “written language,” along with the “discourse”-oriented compositionist and the multi-modal and digital compositionist, to all sit comfortably in the same place of “writing.”<sup>11</sup>

A totalizing assessment then: in each of these cases, the strategic definition of our communal subject accommodates a range of orientations to Composition/Writing while using language that quietly implicates a range of debates about the nature of our field and its subject. This implicitly acknowledges the positive disorientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric, but what follows does so explicitly by staging the problem of terminological selection for the posters in terms of several of the standard orientations within the field and the difficulty of totalizing the whole. “A good question, of course,” Yancey writes, “is, ‘What are the key concepts we need to explain?’”

For some, an obvious choice might be process; for others, genre; for others, digital technology or media; and for still others, audience(s); discourse community; rhetorical knowledge or awareness; reflection; and/or revision—although these hardly exhaust the possibilities. (409)

So, what follows the series of careful, subject-defining and subject-cohering maneuvers is an explicit acknowledgement that the constellation of experts reading Yancey’s introduction would almost certainly see radically different terms as the “obvious choice[s]” for our most central “key concepts” in a poster series intended to help us introduce what we are about in Composition.

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<sup>11</sup> This function and its political, institutional, and curricular significance are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

When the head of one of a discipline's flagship journals feels compelled to maneuver so, particular one as capaciously read and widely engaged as Yancey, we should take seriously the implication that her intended public—us—shares a common history but not necessarily a common present. There is certainly a simple space-concern to contend with (all could conceivably agree on which terms are core but not on which ones most need presenting to various publics in a limited number of posters). But, when a) such a participant in a field and in one of its flagships argues for the uptake of a tool, something as seemingly innocuous as a poster series, with which to communicate to others what that field's central figures are and b) is compelled to begin by strategically defining even the most basic of terms of engagement supposedly shared by all those in her first public and then immediately hedge her bets against the range of different publics *within* that body of experts, let alone outside of them, c) she clearly anticipates that disorientation is afoot. And disorientation amongst us and our other publics is a very real, if entangled, exigency.

#### *1.4 (Dis)orientational Entailment: Spooky Action and the Inheritance of Writing from Composition and English Studies*

Now, obviously, the close reading I have just presented is also strategic—designed to bring attention to the orientational strategies employed to address an anticipated and positive disorientation on the part of an audience of people with a Composition and Rhetoric orientation. I cannot know the range of Yancey's intentionality here, but knowing her work, I am inclined to suspect her of actually being this carefully

(this impressively) orientational in her approach, on some level, but that is somewhat beside the point. What matters here, given her position at one the flagships' helms and in the situation of introducing an orientational project (the poster series), is that the language and strategies she apparently felt compelled to employ seem to anticipate a totalizing Composition and Rhetoric orientation amongst her readers, inclusive of a positive disorientational complex present in the field and worth seeking orientational redress.

An argument could also be made that the poster-series' effect is to reinforce that totalizing orientation, as much as to complicate it. It is a commonly accepted (and historically consistent) feature of Composition and Rhetoric that it is defined by an array of orientations to a variety of subjects—for example, the CCCC “Position Statement on Scholarship in Composition” nearly three decades ago explicitly noted that “Composition research has been characterized since the beginning by its diversity, drawing on several fields of study and many methods of investigation” (n.pag.). It seems unlikely, then, that a conception of a totalizing Comp-Rhet orientation would not also be assumed to be partially defined by an unfixed constellation of orientations therein. So, it is equally important to note that while any critical reader might see in Yancey's language and strategy an attempt to orient the audience in very careful and specific ways to the poster series, a Composition and Rhetoric orientation, which already directs agents' attention to degrees of positive disorientation in the field, is most likely required for that reader to see these seemingly innocuous terminological and definitional maneuvers as being deeply engaged with our institutional and disciplinary history. Otherwise, there is no particular reason to include, for example, a disavowal of composing as “syntax or grammar” as a

problem “we” have to address in our dealings with other audiences because this definition only makes sense as a charged problem if one is aware of and affected by the configuration of “composing” or “Composition” this way—that is, if one is a participant in the field of Composition and Rhetoric.

In this way, we can observe an implication that the difficulty of establishing an actual Writing Studies field and orientation is not only entailed with the disorientation of Composition and Rhetoric but, through Composition, with the disorientation of English. But when I say “entailed,” I mean something specific. Entailment is an important feature of orientational thinking, as I would have orientation understood—it describes the way in which fields and their participants “inherit” orientational and disorientational complexes from their antecedents and the way in which the state of affairs in those antecedents conditions orientational and disorientational relations between them and their “inheritors.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This conception of entailment is arrived at by combining several of its more common definitions in the scope of an orientationalist context. Colloquially, there is the sense of something being entailed with something else as simply “connected,” but the term takes on a much greater degree of specificity, and utility as an orientational function, from the legal, linguistic, logical, and physical senses of the word. In these cases, entailment typically describes a feudal development in law in which the inheritance of property would be restricted to the lineal descendents of the owner; a concept from pragmatics in which the truth of one utterance is dependent on the truth another; a function in formal logic, particularly developed by Allan Ross Anderson and Nuel Belnap as a “logical connective” that is not “*merely* a metalinguistic property,” not a question of determinate “truth-value,” but a collapsing of the formal division between the correlation and an if-then construction (Ricco 58); and a depiction of action at the quantum physical level in which changes to the state of an object can be observed to produce changes to the state of another object far distant from the first, what Einstein famously described as “spooky action at a distance.”

For example, how might the Creative Writing or Literature expert respond to Yancey's definition of writing as a rhetorical "exercise" in "composition" through available "media"? Perhaps actively, perhaps not. But it is most likely only the compositionist who would see an historical, political, departmental battle for legitimacy between Writing (as Composition and Rhetoric) and English (as Literature) inculcated in Yancey's careful positioning of the term "composing" in the frame of negation as the remedial grammarian's province and "writing" in the frame of positive definition specifically through "rhetorical situation." Even the outsider with a personal stake in the definition of writing and an institutional stake in the definition of Composition and Rhetoric (for example, virtually any member of an English department in the past thirty years, in one way or another) is unlikely to immediately see what the insider-public will. Specifically, that is a) a quiet and sophisticated attempt to define the scope and nature of a positively disorientated subject, b) in both conceptual and political response to its having been plagued by a political, departmental, and even public history that often reduced its nature and function, and c) in which rhetorical study emerged as a powerful tool to accomplish Composition's curricular and institutional aims and also to provide a ready set of terms, texts, and methodologies used to define and establish that discipline far beyond its remedial roots in the English-as-Literature department.

This same problematic is implicated in Balzhiser and McLeod's report on findings from the Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition, but in more institutional and curricular terms. The historical emergence of Composition from English is well documented by compositionists (e.g., Kinneavy, Connors, Crowley, Berlin, Lauer,

others) and I will not rehearse it here, except to say that the entailment of Composition and Rhetoric—and so, its positive disorientation—with English and others is represented directly in our curriculum. Quoting Jonathan Culler as “stating that the present English major seems like ‘a conglomeration of various things we are interested in teaching’ rather than a coherent subject” (423), they note that the lit/comp divide “militates against the development of a coherent major,” but also that, even beyond the department, we contend with the well-felt “fact that many faculty in other disciplines, even those who are generally supportive, also find it difficult to think of our field as doing anything more than offering service courses.”

More directly, they write, “an examination of the coursework required” in the Rhet-Comp major(s) shows that:

although the terminology for majors varies, the majors themselves fall into two rough groups, which we shall refer to here as “liberal arts” and “professional/rhetorical” writing majors. In the former, we find a predominance of courses in creative writing and literature; in the latter, most of the coursework focuses on writing theory and praxis. (418)

I do not believe many of us would be comfortable characterizing one or the other of these writing major-types as “more Composition” than the other from the classificatory names alone, but I would be surprised if many of us were quite so hesitant to do so considering the “predominance of courses in creative writing and literature” in the one and of “coursework focus[ing] on writing theory and praxis” in the other. And yet we see both types of majors, according to Balzhiser and McLeod, being called majors in “writing.”

Likewise, they note that we are “now, according to the National Research Council, classified as an ‘emerging discipline’ (the first step in the NRC taxonomy in

being recognized as a full-fledged discipline rather than as a subfield)” and that “clearly, our major is also emerging” (429), by which they mean not yet fully established and recognized but in the process of becoming so. Prior to this identification, however, Composition and Rhetoric had been listed as a “subfield” of English.<sup>13</sup> Taken together with the positive disorientation represented in our “writing” majors—some more “English-oriented,” some more “Composition and Rhetoric-oriented”—this classificatory shift is significant because it signifies, very efficiently, the entailment of one field and its (dis)orientation with its antecedent, in this case, Composition with English—and, by extension, Writing Studies with both.

## **2. Enacting a Potential Writing Studies Field and Orientation**

### *2.1 From Discipline to Potential Field*

Turning now to the negative disorientation of Writing Studies—its potential to socially and psychologically orient human agents as Writing Studies scholars without yet having an already-operative orientation available to those agents in practice, *besides* those of Composition and Rhetoric—we should attend to two additional entailments: discipline-field and potentiality-actuality. At this point, however, I have largely engaged in primarily disciplinary, institutional, and curricular attempts (through Sally in the previous chapter and then through a flagship journal, the developing Writing Major, and

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<sup>13</sup> As a further example of the orientational function of entailment, some rhetorically-oriented scholars may even see this categorical shifting closely entailed with a much older debate about the status of rhetoric as an architectonic art governing all subjects, which extends as far back as Giambattista Vico, at the very least, such that “Rhetoric is the discipline of disciplines, the philosophy of philosophy . . .” (Crosswhite 11) as actually contextualizing Balzhiser and McLeod’s argument.

the CCC poster series and its introduction) to help us “get oriented,” to know what we are looking at in the disorientational complex of Writing Studies. In the end, however, what this method provides is an analytical understanding, a way of seeing concrete manifestations of disorientation, without providing a clear way forward in actualizing a Writing Studies field in which to participate and a clear orientation with which to do so.

Which brings us to a point of distinction. In attending to disorientation and orientation, just as it is not to our advantage to use “Composition” interchangeably with “Writing Studies,” neither is it to our advantage to use “discipline” interchangeably with “field.” Disciplines are oriented *because* fields are oriented, although the orientation of disciplines bears on the orientation of their fields. “Field,” as I would have the concept understood—as something similar to what Kenneth Pike calls a “network of relationships” (283)<sup>14</sup>—is non-identical to “discipline.”

Etymologically, “discipline” has not escaped its earliest valences as a term referring primarily to punishment or training (as those with a Foucauldian orientation have been highlighting for many years now). John Ransom, for example, defines “‘disciplines’ in Foucauldian terms as those micromechanisms of power whereby individuals are molded to serve the needs of power” in the “formation and reeducation of individuals”(59) and which “must involve imposition of a full timetable of activities” in the interest of “forcing the individual to change behaviors and adopt certain habits” (34). Discipline, as Colin Gordon writes, refers also to “a continuous network of power

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<sup>14</sup> Pike’s definition is part of his development of tagmemic theory and participates in a much wider and more diffuse study generally referred to as “Field Theory.” Please see Chapter 5 on the implications and limitations of a “field-theoretical orientation.”



connecting the vigilance of the sovereign to the minute regulation and supervision of individual conduct” (25). Likewise, in a related but less technical sense, discipline often refers to established “schools” of study and/or the formal teaching and training of acolytes therein. So, even in the contemporary milieu of Composition and Rhetoric, it is unsurprising to see the term “discipline” (and “field” where the two terms are conflated in academic writing) refer commonly to a system and ecology of institutionally housed and supported research, power, activities (like scholarship and teaching), knowledge, methods, and apprenticeship. However, the historical development of arguments as to the disciplinary status of Composition have engaged, to some degree, the difference and relation *between* fields and disciplines.

For a familiar demonstration, Lauer’s famous investigation of “Composition Studies” as a “dappled discipline” hinges on the idea that Composition is a *field* whose *disciplinarity* is in question and forwards a definition of disciplinarity on two levels:

At its deepest level, a discipline has a special set of phenomena to study, a characteristic mode or modes of inquiry, its own history of development, its theoretical ancestors and assumptions, its evolving body of knowledge, and its own epistemic courts by which knowledge gains status. Its surface features include a particular departmental home, a characteristic ritual of academic preparation, and its own scholarly organizations and journals. (“Composition Studies” 20)

“Field,” however, is left a more shadowy concept even in Lauer’s piece (where *not* entirely synonymous with “discipline,” the term appears typically to function as some form of an abstract spatial metaphor for the *location* of things like disciplines, arguments, or inquiry). So, though she often uses “discipline” and “field” seemingly interchangeably throughout the remainder of the essay, Lauer does suggest difference and a relation

between the two by asking: “what are the criteria by which a field may be judged a functioning discipline? The question is an important and tough one to answer” (“Composition Studies” 22).<sup>15</sup> Her attempts to do so depend largely on constructions and functions of audiencial responses to work in the field/discipline of Composition at the social level (disciplinarity seemingly being established at the point of reifying “consensus” about a field’s work as “knowledge” with attendant institutional housing and curricular tracks). This is, of course, only one example—but it is characteristic of discipline-centric studies in Composition in that, while “discipline” understandably gets serious attention given the historical concern with our disciplinary status in the Academy,

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<sup>15</sup> Joseph Bizup notes that “Composition scholars concerned with questions of disciplinarity turn repeatedly to Toulmin” (W5). For example, Lauer claims that one difference between fields and disciplines, based on Toulminian conceptions from *Human Understanding*, is the presence of “an epistemic court” in the latter, “which Toulmin describes as a community of experts who reach consensus in accord with their interpretations of the discipline’s basic tasks. The court of composition studies consists of scholars who are both knowledgeable about the range of existing research and contributing to one or the other of types of inquiry about written discourse. They evaluate the quality of research and substantive reasons that support new work, guided by the degree of relationship between the work and the field’s ideals and score of unresolved problems” (“Composition Studies” 22). This does not necessarily, however, formalize the difference between fields and disciplines as Lauer’s use of this “epistemic court” concept is in much the same sense as some prominent definitions of “field” also operative in Composition, for example, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “field” as the “community of experts in [a] domain” (Phelps, “Traveling” 152). Likewise, Toulmin, himself, leaves “field” relatively undefined, other than to say that it is a “technical term” such that we might “accordingly talk of a *field* of arguments. Two arguments will be said to belong to the same field when the data and conclusions in each of the two arguments are, respectively, of the same logical type: they will be said to come from different fields when the backing or the conclusions in each of the two arguments are not of the same logical type” (14, emphasis in the original). In this sense, the function is somewhat analogous to the function of the “epistémé,” which Foucault defines as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable” within a given discursive field, such as “a field of scientificity” and which enables a description of that which is of such a field or not (197).

the actual meaning of “field” is never resolved. And it is the very vagueness of the term’s referent that has allowed us to so commonly conflate field-ness with disciplinarity.

While disciplinarity is certainly a relevant concern when seeking to understand the likely and motivating factors of a (dis)orientational complex in Writing Studies and/or Composition, it is a mistake to reduce the broad range of field-based factors to “disciplined” training and schools of thought and practice, or to any of the “surface features” (vis-à-vis Lauer) that might help to identify a discipline. Not doing so, of course, is enormously difficult because we have so commonly employed the basic tools of disciplinary theory (interdisciplinarity, for example) in framing how fields relate, interact, and divide (for example, the question of whether “Composition and Rhetoric” is *a* discipline or an interdisciplinary field made up of the *many* disciplines like Composition, Rhetoric, and others), most commonly investigated in terms of institutional history, canon, curriculum, and training.

A field, from an orientationalist perspective, is essentially an orienting and oriented social or psychological location. This definition, of course, requires some unpacking, as it breaks significantly from the conventional use of “field” as a synonym for “academic discipline,” and field, as a concept distinct from discipline, is much less present in our discourse. On the one hand, we could suggest that this is specifically because the two terms have often been assumed to have the same referent (similar to the interchangeable use of “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric”) and so study of discipline *is* study of field. On the other hand, we will find such studies in Composition and elsewhere much more often with “discipline” in their titles than “field,”

and so it seems reasonable to assume that, while we commonly conflate the two terms, “discipline” has occupied a privileged position over “field.” So, some measure of difference is at least implicitly recognized by academic writers, even if only in our titular diction as, otherwise, no privileged position would exist for one term over the other. Separating the two explicitly, I see field as the more useful concept in understanding the (dis)orientational potential of Writing Studies.

For example, we can easily observe that many academic disciplines study “the group,” Sociology and Social Psychology come readily to mind here, but scholars from a broad swath of disciplines bring concepts of groupness into their work in Evolutionary Biology, Genetics, Economics, Mathematics, Cultural Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, Anthropology, Archaeology, and so on—just as many disciplines study “writing” (Composition, Creative Writing, Literature, Philosophy, etc.). So, I might, without much trepidation, deploy the phrase “the field of Group Studies” in a new book on the role of “the group” in Composition and Rhetoric as referring to a constellation of all those agents and works interested in, discussing, and publishing on some discipline-specific concept of group-ness in Composition and Rhetoric that might be relevant to an argument I wish to make about group-ness in the study of writing/composing. And I would know that with a little unpacking of “the field of Group Studies,” I could easily configure for my readers a conceptual location of scholarship on group-ness in which I can then be seen to be participating as a compositionist and in which my book can be

seen to be bringing something from “the field of Group Studies” into Comp-Rhet and also potentially bringing Comp-Rhet into “the field of Group Studies.”<sup>16</sup>

Though, with a little definitional ingenuity, I may be able to produce a logical argument that scholars in all the disparate disciplines for whom “the group” is a question are, in fact, all part of a single *discipline* called “Group Studies,” I would struggle to meaningfully persuade most of that population to adapt their institutions, curricula, and disciplinary practices to better cohere around the groupist orientation as being clearly at the center their experience and practice as agents in the academic universe. Specialization has its advantages, of course, but a scholar who approaches problems of groupness from the perspective of genetic factors, for example, can and will be likely to more readily identify as a geneticist than a groupist and is unlikely to be persuaded to abandon the former identification for the latter because a) groupness is much less immediately inclusive of the broad range of things attended to by geneticists (who might study the genetic implications and causes of human or other groupings—or not) or mathematicians (who might study groupness through set theory—or not) than those attended to by sociologists, for example, and b) groupness is attended to in these and other disparate disciplines through radically different discipline-specific methodologies and epistemological canons. So, Group Studies presents a relatively easy demonstration of the

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<sup>16</sup> Please note, this example plays on an observational and categorical trope forwarded in the field-theoretical approaches to social psychology of Kurt Lewin and gestures toward a larger inventory methodology used throughout this project. Please see Chapter 5 on “grouping,” the identification of “Writing Studies agents,” and “Field-Based Inquiry” for details. Likewise, there is a complex locativity and subject(ivity) at work in this example, which will be further developed in Chapters 3 and 4.

distinction between “field” and “discipline,” largely because it is fairly easy to conceptually place a number of disciplines within that field.

It is more difficult to conceptualize “field” clearly when dealing with fields *within* extant academic disciplines because of what I might call the “homonymous function.” The discipline of Composition is not the field of Writing Studies—but neither is it the field, disorienting as this may be, of Composition. The two terms, “Composition” (discipline) and “Composition” (field) are isomorphic homonyms. The term “Composition” (discipline) names an operative and institutionalized *concept*, a representative *thing* we conceptually locate within the *field* of Composition (as an abstract, social and psychological place oriented toward the teaching and learning of writing or some other subject) and by which we identify that field’s concrete manifestations, such as specialized texts, particular human participants, academic departments with offices for faculty who work with particularized student populations and curricula, graduate programs and professional organizations where disciplinary epistemology and identity are institutionally reified, journals and presses through which new work from the *field* is brought to the attentions of *disciplinarily* apprenticed and specialized readers. And we may locate the discipline of Composition (or Creative Writing and others) in the field of Writing Studies (or vice versa), as Composition has already begun to do in its uptake of the phrase “Writing Studies” in discourse and institutional naming practices.

I would, then, call Writing Studies a *field* only inasmuch as the phrase “Writing Studies” designates not a manifest academic discipline that is canonized and

institutionally supported within the Academy but to the degree that it refers, instead, to a locative abstraction in which disciplines, agents, and other elements may be placed. “Writing Studies” names a potential field where it refers, conceptually, to the *possibility* of a distinct social and psychological location with an operative and identifiable orientation. “Writing Studies” is an actual field where it refers, conceptually, to an oriented and orienting locative and figural abstraction defined as a whole by an always-unfixed, dynamic constellation of people interested in writing and other subjects of inquiry (likely hailing from many distinct disciplines) and co-relevant patterns of orientation and attention to those subjects, patterns of production and consecration<sup>17</sup> of various objects to be used in the study of writing and writing-related things, and, in which, some number of disciplines or at least some number of orientations common in various disciplines can be logically placed. When we refer to the “*field* of Writing Studies,” we are referring to a potential that has arisen within the *discipline* of Composition and Rhetoric, but when we refer to the “*discipline* of Writing Studies,” accepting that Writing Studies and Composition are non-identical, we are referring to something that does not yet exist other than as a distant potential of the *field* of Writing Studies.

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<sup>17</sup> “Consecration,” in this context, refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s construction of the concept in *Fields of Cultural Production*, which he defines essentially as the conferral of “legitimacy” (121), often as a result of a “process of canonization” or credentialing (123) as a form of symbolic capital conferred upon texts, authors, and other structures within fields.

## 2.2 Troping Potentiality and Actuality: From Calling for Potential Action to (En)Action

More classically-oriented readers are sure to have already, and rightly, detected something of an Aristotelian sleight of hand in my description of Writing Studies as more a *potential* than an *actual* field. So, to make that sleight-of-hand more explicit now, without diverting to a full-scale analysis of Aristotelian potentiality vs. actuality, the basic trick is terminological (and entelechial) in nature.<sup>18</sup>

First, I should note that the terminological tactic I have employed here and elsewhere throughout this essay is not merely play—nor should it be taken as a cavalier (mis)understanding of Aristotelian theory. This kind of ludic terminological devising is a deliberate *orientational strategy* inspired by, among other models, Burke’s practice of orienting readers toward Motives through “logological” means, in that it is concerned with constellating “key terms—or terministic functions” (*LASA* 164). My logological practices in enacting Writing Studies’ orientation and its field generally follow Burke’s own strategy of taking both colloquial and technical wording and arguments and changing their orientations (and our orientations to them) in his discussion of the grammar, rhetoric, and symbology of human Motive. Burke’s trick is not simply in playfully (mis)applying terms but in taking them *out* of the their traditional context and re-placing them, so to speak, into the *field* of his work—effectively changing toward

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<sup>18</sup> There is also an obvious relation here to the Wittgensteinian position that the meaning of a word is its use in the language, but I am concerned with something related-to-but-more-than language and meaning. The phrase “Writing Studies” is already used, “actually,” in *Composition and Rhetoric*. But the phrase in the language of compositionists does not generally appear to be used to refer to a field distinct from *Composition*. Please see Chapter 3 for details (and for a more developed construction of the entelechial function of potentiality/actuality).



what those terms and arguments would point and produce and their location, changing their orientation that is, and thereby enacting a “terministic screen” sufficient and appropriate to his task. See, for example, his discussion of “Understanding” in the *Grammar of Motives*. Burke subtly locates the problem of Understanding from both colloquial usage and a long-standing philosophical argument about the nature of objects, of *things*, and re-locates the term and its traditional tropes in colloquial and philosophical discussion *into* the symbological, terministic field of his Grammar. As a result of this re-location, Understanding can then refer instead to a locative relationship between symbological objects (like *words*) in a significatory constellation operating as a symbological “ground” in motivistic study and discourse.

So, with this trick in mind, Book Θ of the *Metaphysics* takes up Aristotle’s description of actual and potential infinities in the *Physics* and then primarily draws a distinction between potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*energeia*). However, in the *Metaphysics*, the distinction is less in terms of the relationship between matter and form, less in terms of the exercise of *dunamis* as the power of *kinesis*, of movement or process, “not a thing’s power to produce a change” but, instead, “its capacity to be in a different and more completed state” (Cohen). A negatively disoriented Writing Studies entailed with the positive disorientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric would, then, be a potentiality. It is best defined by its current capacity to come into a different (from Comp-Rhet) and more complete existence, though it will *draw on* Composition and Rhetoric as a preceding actuality that lends power, matter, and form to produce change in our

thinking about writing, about writers, and about orientations to them. The problem at hand is how to best address that potential and actualize it.

The typical strategy I see taken up in scholarship attending to a disorientational complex (a few well-known examples being works like Susan Miller's *Rescuing the Subject* and *Textual Carnivals*, or Scholes' *The Rise and Fall of English*) is an historical-critical method in which a scholar analyzes a present state as providing cues for how to reorient a very positively disoriented and highly actualized field (like Composition and Rhetoric or English) around a single (or small grouping of) historically extant orientation(s) taken as "central" to the field's present and then calling for institutional, disciplinary, and curricular action to cohere around it.<sup>19</sup>

Consider virtually any of the better-known 1990s re-orientational texts in English (Scholes, Berubé, and North, among others), during which time, the rise of Composition and Rhetoric was (and, of course, still is) deeply inculcated in the disorientation of that field. These works tend to trace disciplinary, institutional, and curricular histories as methods by which to discuss the causes of disorientation in English (typically figured as "fracture" of the discipline or its subject) and tend to prescribe disciplinary, institutional, and curricular cures intended to somehow *return* English to a clearly focused, clearly oriented discipline. For example, after assessing the manifestations of English's disorientational complex in *The Rise and Fall of English*, Robert Scholes calls for a

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<sup>19</sup> Please note that we have already seen this strategy employed in both Balzhiser and McLeod's project and in the *CCC* poster series initiative previously analyzed to show concrete manifestations of the positive disorientational complex of Composition. Both call for a move toward "coherence" around an orienting name or set of terms in addressing anticipated disorientations productively.

return to “grammar,” “rhetoric,” and “dialectic” as the orientational core of a diffuse English discipline that is not accurately totalized by “literature.” That is, he makes an historical argument for one English orientation as primary and calls us to locate these components of the trivium as its central subjects, around which we should cohere and to which participants can and should direct their disciplined attention and curriculum. But this has not been, and will not be, successful. Scholes, himself, says as much—that this historical disciplinary approach has already failed in his relatively recent re-assessment. His project, as he explains:

involved recognizing the rhetorical roots of English studies and adopting a modernized version of the medieval trivium — grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic — as the basis of an English discipline. Now, ten years later, I no longer think that is possible. We cannot reverse the move from rhetoric to literature that I chronicled in the book and return to a more tightly focused discipline. (“The English Curriculum” 229-230)

Instead, he proposes for English that we orient ourselves toward a clear subject, however broad, with a mind not to our past but to our emergent future. “So,” says Scholes “we must move on from literature, narrowly defined, to textuality — a looser, broader concept that opens a direction toward a viable future . . .” (“The English Curriculum” 230).<sup>20</sup>

However, the future-critical method is no better. Take, for example, the rise of digital composition and digital rhetoric. Arguments abound—both in scholarship and departmental debate—about the future of Composition and Rhetoric relative to the digital

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<sup>20</sup> Other models may be seen in, for example, Robert Connors’ claim in “Writing the History of Our Discipline” that “Composition studies is both the oldest and the newest of the humanities, and our gradual realization of this dual nature is probably the reason for the growing importance of historical study in composition. Traditionally melioristic and oriented toward a beckoning future, composition scholars are realizing that the future can most fruitfully be studied with a knowledge of more than a century’s experience in teaching and studying writing” (49).

and digitally multi-modal. The, or at least *a*, future of Composition is often presented in such debates as *being* digital (e.g., J. Elizabeth Clark's "The Digital Imperative: Making the Case for a 21st-Century Pedagogy," or, in a more nuanced approach that merges both the future-critical and historical-critical, Jeff Rice's *The Rhetoric of Cool: Composition Studies and New Media*), and the call to action is instantiated both in our increasingly common institutional alignment with New Media and Communications Studies, rather than with English or Creative Writing, and in our curriculum (programmatic standards for digital composing and digital literacies, the ever-more-common inclusion of digital video and a variety of multi-modal webtexts on the projects list for courses in "writing"). I do not mean to suggest that a Digital Composition and Rhetoric is or is not the likely future of the discipline. But I do think it reasonable (and productive) for compositionists staring down an emerging path toward a disciplinary, institutional, and curricular future in which "writing" is primarily a metaphor for many different forms of composing to be able to say, "wait, I want to work with writing—actual *writing*, on screen but also on paper" without having the concern dismissed out of hand as simply anachronistic and luddite. "Digital composition" (or simply "composing" more broadly defined) may well turn out to be the future of our institutional unit in the University, but "writing" does not fall into an abandoned past in the field just because a new disciplinary future is identified as being institutionally advantageous. Digital composition and other enlarged conceptions of writing as "composing"—enabled by digitality or not—represent again, only other orientations in the field. Totalizing the whole field of other orientations that is contemporary Composition and Rhetoric and calling for action to cohere around a single

orientation (digital or otherwise) will not adequately address the positive disorientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric, nor will it do so for Writing Studies.

In either case, the critical method of addressing the disorientational complex of Writing Studies and Composition (critically tracing a disciplinary, institutional, and curricular history or future) comes up short. Even if it were not to land in the institutional, disciplinary, and/or curricular solutions such projects almost invariably do, this approach most often ends in a *call* for coherence based on the analysis, rather than actually offering up substantial action itself, providing more likely a critical understanding of institutional, curricular, and disciplinary disorientation than an actualized field (beyond the text as/in a field itself).

So, the problem with this method is two-fold. First, basing our approach to the potential of Writing Studies on either an historical or a future configuration based on a totalizing of that field through one or another extant orientation will not work because, while we have very many operative orientations at play in Composition and Rhetoric, this is not yet the case for Writing Studies where the two are non-identical. Second, the only reasonable call to action we could make would be to *develop* the potential of a Writing Studies field and orientation to a “more complete state” of being, keeping in mind the positive disorientational state of Composition and Rhetoric from which a potential Writing Studies orientation is emergent.

Enactment, then, serves as a more efficient, more effective (and, likely, affective) way to move forward, methodologically using enactment as a site of invention and extending the orientational gambit of introduction. Of course it is common enough in all

sorts of discourse to use “enactment” to generally mean “an actualizing” or “a performance,” but, as an orientational strategy, the concept is more complex. We need to do more than describe; we need to demonstrate, to perform Writing Studies in practice, not just critically represent it historically or as a future disciplinary, curricular, or institutional version of Composition. We need to introduce things *into* the field of Writing Studies actually, to populate the space with material subjects and texts capable of orienting agents wanting to *be* Writing Studies participants, as it is the “wanting to be” that governs the field’s orientational potential as a material problem.

This “material problem” has begun to be developed already in Composition and Rhetoric beyond simple disciplinarity, which provides a useful grounding. For example, the potential of Composition is partly as a place in which scholars motivated by an interest in “writing” (whatever its referent might be) can work and be instantiated as part of a community concerned with some “writing” as subject-*matter*. It is something of a developing “object-oriented rhetoric” increasingly participating in what Scott Barnett has described as a “‘material turn’ in rhetoric and composition” such that attentions have increasingly turned to “material objects . . . technology, the body, space and place, and the natural world. Not separate or merely additional constituents in rhetorical situations, these materialities and their intertwinings constitute our reality—are part of the very *is-ness* of that reality—in ways that fundamentally shape our very senses of what writing means and how we practice and teach writing in the world today” (n.pag.). So, to make

Writing Studies more “real” in this sense, we need *be* part of its materiality, to enact, to act as though in an actualized Writing Studies, rather than only describe and call to act.<sup>21</sup>

An actualized Writing Studies field would be an orienting and oriented place in which to get our bearings and participate as agents. An actualized Writing Studies orientation would be set of beliefs, a worldview, and tendency of attention that directs our actions and experience. And enacting such a Writing Studies takes up a rhetorical prestidigitation of material and (meta)physical concerns, bringing the potentiality of Writing Studies into the actual by giving it materiality, by bringing it into *enargeia*, to “vivid clarity” as Allen translates the term. And the goal is to enact a Writing Studies concept capable of *actually* directing what we might *do* as scholars *in* that field—a Writing Studies that functions as a kind of *enargeis* figure that “implicitly conveys the pragmatist’s idea that beliefs are fully realized (and fully recognizable) only once, internalized, they govern action” (59-60).

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<sup>21</sup> The relation between “acting” and “calling to action” is a complex problem in enacting fields specifically through written texts (like this project, for example). In general, *describing* Writing Studies begins with the proposition that the phrase “Writing Studies” may in fact name a field, rather than being only a synonym for the field, discipline, or curriculum of Composition and Rhetoric. And that description enacts Writing Studies only to the degree that its author and/or its readers treat that initial descriptive proposition as intending to serve as precedential grounds for the consequent notion that it must then be possible to *be* an agent *of* and *in* that field, and so to warrant further enactment rather than to take “initial” action in response to possibilities raised by “mere” description. One of the most significant claims offered by rhetorical critic Kathleen Campbell in this context is that, in literary texts for example, enactment describes instances in which a given rhetorical artifact is the direct embodiment of the rhetor’s *intention* (47-48, my emphasis). I would argue, though, if it is the case that an enactment is the direct embodiment of the rhetor’s intention, all descriptions and all writing (in fact, all compositions in any form) are enactive—although this position is dependent on a particular way of thinking about enactment, about writing, and about their effects. Please see Chapter 3 for details in terms of “writing” and Chapter 5 for details in terms of “enactive methodology and texts.”

But a *call*, even one offered Platonically in “vivid language . . . capable of transforming human action” (Allen 60) has to call for more than just analytical comprehension of the orientational problematic and call for the *right* action—which is not necessarily “to cohere.” Coherence, like clarity, is a hegemonic ruse.<sup>22</sup> We will have to invent our *enargeis* figure of “Writing Studies” as not just an institutional, curricular, or disciplinary term but as *energeia*, which “literally means ‘en-acted,’ or ‘that which appears in the *doing* of things’” (60, my emphasis). That is, Writing Studies has to actually be *done* by individuals for Writing Studies to *be*, and to be material and orienting for others, no matter how variously.

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<sup>22</sup> See again Ian Barnard’s “The Ruse of Clarity” in *College Composition and Communication*.



*Part Two: From Fielding to Enacting*

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Enacting the Subjects of Writing:*

#### *On Occupying Writing Studies in/and Composition-and-Rhetoric-Writ-Large(r)*

My colleague Marvin Diogenes and I have talked endlessly about what I'm calling our "vocabulary problem," and eventually we tried our hand at defining writing in a way that does not mirror the reductiveness of current dictionary definitions. Get ready, because it's clunky (at best), but here it is . . .

— Andrea Lunsford, from "Writing, Technologies, and the Fifth Canon," 2006

I have called for (or promised) the enactment of Writing Studies from, rather than as, contemporary Composition and Rhetoric. Doing so is both conceptually and practically difficult, requiring the production of material content (subjects, to begin with) and space to occupy and be occupied with that content. However, to delimit and focus, I am not interested in simply theorizing a version of that Writing Studies independent of the many (de)limiting factors that would bear on its enactment by agents, the most significant of which come from locating the field and its (dis)orientational complex within the space of Composition. So, given that the purpose of my larger project is not to investigate Writing Studies in general but specifically its orientational and enactive potential as a field emergent *within* contemporary Composition and Rhetoric, the compositionist is here conceived as a potential Writing Studies agent. As a result, I am then concerned primarily, in both conceptual and practical terms, with the various orientational, political, definitional, and identity stakes at play in the enactment of Writing Studies' content and space by compositionists.

As hinted at in the close of the preceding chapter, I see enactment specifically as the entelechial counterpart to field-orientation, as its "actualization . . . the moment in which something arrives 'in its goal' (*en telei*), that is, reaches its completion. The term is almost synonymous with *energeia* (realization, act), but Aristotle," for example, "prefers 'entelechy' when he wants to emphasize the moment of fulfillment or completion, while he prefers the term *act* for emphasizing the moment of activity" (Höffe 92). I see the task of enacting Writing Studies through subjects and space, then, as the act of entelechializing the field's orientational potential as an *enargeis* figure. However, strict

Aristotelian entelechy as a final cause, or “the holding or completing” of “the end,” via Samuel Boardman’s translation (297), would mean that the enacted “completion” of a *potential* Writing Studies within an already highly *actualized* contemporary Composition and Rhetoric would be difficult to achieve in practice as it implies the possibility of some determinate final form of the space of either field, their contents, and their orientations.

A full discussion of Aristotelian potentiality and actuality in enacting Writing Studies is beyond the scope of this study, but Janet Atwill’s gloss lays the problem bare:

Aristotle’s concepts of potentiality (*dynamis*) and actuality (*energeia*) are closely related to the four final causes and provide some explanation for the close relationship between formal and final causality. *Dynamis* refers to the capacity of something to act (or develop) and to be acted upon; *energeia* refers to the movement toward fulfillment (*entelechia*). In the *Physics*, Aristotle explains that a house is a potentiality in the process of building. Once completed, the potentiality is no longer there. Thus actuality is the process by which a potentiality is fulfilled. (6)

Unlike a house, the potential of fields and orientations does not disappear at the point of their having been “built” as no true point of “completion” is especially desirable (or, perhaps, possible)—the point of enacting oriented and orienting fields is specifically to enable their continuance and/or further evolution. Fields and orientations change and make new potentialities that, in turn, enable the continued evolution of new actualities and potentialities. For example, the actuality of contemporary Composition and Rhetoric makes possible the development of a Writing Studies field and orientation therein, and the actuality of individual enactments of either field or orientation by scholars—in a text or teaching practice, for example—potentializes further enactments by others. Fields, orientations, and the contents and spaces that make them identifiable and actionable are more like complex ecosystems than houses, and so a more vitalistic sense of enactment-

as-entelechy, as an “actualized substance of things” (Boardman 298), is useful for arriving at a sense of the enactment of Writing Studies as actualizing its substantive potential. Of course, this begs the question of what the enactive entelechial substance of Writing Studies might be—a question that predicts some of what the task of enacting such a field and orientation entails.

A Writing Studies orientation is brought into more meaningful existence in the *doing* of things in its field, and that Writing Studies field is brought into more meaningful existence *through* oriented action. So, making good on a promise to enact seems simple enough: do Writing Studies. But how? The easiest way to proceed would seem to be to identify some part of its substance and act on it, likely, to define it. And a reasonable assumption of one of the primary substances of Writing Studies would be its subject—presumably, the study of writing.

Keeping in mind a general conception of orientation as a felt, experientially, and behaviorally consequential sense of where we are and toward what we are facing, if a Writing Studies orientation is one in which we are in the space of a field partially constituted by writing as its core subject, then studying writing *is* doing Writing Studies. However, this does not necessarily provide either a particularly practicable sense of *what* that subject is or of *where* we are in its study, given that writing is studied extensively in various fields and disciplines (Composition and Rhetoric, Creative Writing, Journalism, Philosophy, Author Studies, etc.). This suggests that enacting a Writing Studies field and orientation in contemporary Composition and Rhetoric is, first, a problem of relations between subjects and locations. The two cannot be fully separated in field-oriented

practice (*what* I study in Composition and Rhetoric will generally be influenced by my being *in* Composition and Rhetoric, and *where* I am in that field will generally be influenced *by* what I study),<sup>1</sup> but ordering the terms heuristically is methodologically useful.

So, a reasonable way to begin would seem to be to identify writing as the field's clearly nominated, core subject and then to attempt to develop a definition of that writing as observably distinct from the writing of Composition and Rhetoric and other fields such that Writing Studies may emerge as a distinct location from which to study its subject. Doing so would seem to a) demonstrate a practical outcome and potential of an actualized, an *enacted* Writing Studies field and manifest orientation and b) by comparative definition, provide an *enactable* form of subject-matter, c) toward which Writing Studies agents would then be *oriented* differently than those in Composition and Rhetoric or elsewhere. Writing Studies could then be observed as a distinct location—as a distinctly occupiable space—in which a distinct subject of writing and myriad agents oriented to its study are to be found therein. And, if a distinct subject of writing and set of

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<sup>1</sup> For example, researching and writing on digital video in 21<sup>st</sup> century Composition and Rhetoric makes it more likely that I might attend to questions of the role digital video genres might play in the “writing” classroom and/or about the rhetorical questions at stake in teaching students about composing in videographic texts, and somewhat less likely (though not inconceivable) that I would attend to opportunities and problems in the production of digital video in terms of new advances in Flash coding. Likewise, doing so makes it more likely that I might position myself as being *in* the sub-field of Digital/Multimodal Composition within a larger domain of Composition and Rhetoric, which would, in turn, likely influence my selection of journals in which I might seek to publish my work, the faculty positions for which I might apply, and the content of the courses I might teach as a compositionist.

agents occupied by its study could be produced, we would have manifest the material existence of and distinction between the fields of Writing Studies and Composition.

This general impulse is not wrong. But the general process just outlined represents both an oversimplification of the process of enacting a Writing Studies field and orientation within contemporary Composition and Rhetoric in the first place and ignores many of the limitations and implications of doing so through the definition of subjects (writing or otherwise).

In particular, as I will demonstrate, we should take seriously the conceptual and other difficulties of defining writing as a subject in *both* Writing Studies and Composition, as well as the orientational, political, and identity factors at play in doing so, vis-à-vis the role of the study of a variously defined “writing” *in* Composition. Particularly in the modern University, compositionists—whether as potential Writing Studies agents or not—have a significant stake in both defining and enacting subjects, in general, and the subject of writing, specifically. As such, the enactment of Writing Studies in Composition through the definition of writing as its (own) subject has significant implications for how either field is defined and relations between them; for what either field’s agents do, claim, and are responsible for pedagogically and institutionally; and for the construction of a space to be occupied by the subject(s) of writing in and between both fields in a way that is responsive to the potential role an enacted Writing Studies might play in Composition's field, identification, and institutional capital.

## 1. “Occupying” Writing Subjects Conceptually in Space and Discourse

### *1.1 The Subject of Writing and/in Composition as a Conceptual-Political Problem (Or, On the Concept and Act of Occupation)*

Beginning with the conceptual difficulties, enacting Writing Studies in Composition and Rhetoric by claiming writing as its subject is a manifold “occupational” prospect that must account for, at minimum: the relations between each field’s subjects as both contents and human agents, what subject(ive) content those agents then claim, and the spaces they inhabit, actualize, and correlate in doing so—particularly, *between* Writing Studies and contemporary Composition and Rhetoric. For example, “the subject of composition is at least a twofold prospect,” says Susan Miller. Traditionally speaking, she writes, “we have thought of an academic subject as a body of knowledge, like mathematics, that stands by and for itself, and we have assumed that its students ‘take’ it” (*Textual* 84). As epistemological content, that subject is “the body of knowledge within a field,” but this:

also implies a human subjectivity of a particular sort, a characterization of those of who learn and profess its methods, solve its problems, and take seriously its most pertinent issues. And this subjectivity works to create a field’s content, often in covert ways. A “subject” is thus not a static body of knowledge, but an affective space. It includes students in a particular mode of relations to each other and to their world. The “content” of any field is realized only in relation to those who participate in it. (ibid)

So, in this construction, the power to enact the content of a field rests in the hands of participatory agents. The subjects (“contents”) of Writing Studies and of Composition, then, are potentialities that are actualized (“realized”) by and in relation to a field-specific subjectivity (a “character[istic] of those of who learn and profess its methods, solve its



problems, and take seriously its most pertinent issues”).<sup>2</sup> However, Miller’s construction of Composition’s subject as an “affective space” complicates matters and raises the stakes for any compositionist enacting Writing Studies by claiming subject(ive) content for the field because, as Sidney Dobrin argues, “to address any notion of space requires that we also address the idea of occupation” (“Occupation” 19).

For example, claiming writing—and those agents devoted to its study—as occupying *either* Writing Studies *or* Composition and Rhetoric requires an untenable spatial logic and politics of occupation. This sort of occupation, as Dobrin explains, “refers to the act of occupying or being occupied, the taking of possession of a space. Conceptually, ‘taking possession’ means social and political practice” and would likely bring about “a struggle for power, an ideological struggle to inscribe meaning” (“Occupation” 12) to and over writing by agents in both fields. That is, where *either* compositionists *or* Writing Studies agents claim the subject of writing and anyone occupied by its study as occupying the space of their *own* discourse, their *own* place in the University, or otherwise more broadly, both fields would enter a political and rhetorical “struggle to inscribe meaning” into the subject of writing and to claim ownership of that subject and the space in which it is occupied, and even of the naming of

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting an obvious parallel between “subjectivity” as described by Miller (and others) and “orientation” as I developed the term in the preceding chapters. While I do not understand the two to be synonymous (in general, I would say that our subjectivities and our orientations recursively and iteratively *condition* one another), “subjectivity” certainly provides either a useful analogy for “orientation” or a complex locative question to be investigated in further research (i.e., the function of orientation *within* the space of subjectivities and of subjectivity *within* the space of orientations).

that space in discourse. Beyond even the particulars of Writing Studies in/and Composition, this is because, in grandiose terms:

All occupations are discursive, rhetorical, hegemonic. Through its occupations, space is not merely social, it is political. It is precisely the political occupation of a space that imbues that spaces [sic] with its place-ness. Conflict for control over naming a place, for controlling the power to say what can and cannot occupy a space, is often a fight to change the way that place has been named by other occupiers who held power in different temporal moments. (Dobrin, "Occupation" 20)

Further, claiming the subject of writing and its agents as occupying *either* Writing Studies *or* Composition might suggest either field's "being subject to the action of occupation," almost as a "new cultural apparatus (the ban of one kind of literacy and the promotion of another)," as an almost "enforced occupation" (Dobrin, "Occupation" 21).

At least conceptually, though, this need not be the case. Where Writing Studies is an emergent field within contemporary Composition, potential Writing Studies agents *may* be subject to their occupation in Composition and Rhetoric, but the subject of writing *must* conceptually occupy both fields, while the "local" form of that subject would be intimately correlated but non-identical. Practically speaking, then, both compositionists in and not-in Writing Studies may contribute disparately to the "act of holding a position within a space, to the hegemonic writing of a place" for writing, such that "the manner in which individuals occupy their time through engagement or the pursuit" of the study of writing as their subjective "employment/work (those terms distinctly different)," their "profession" or "calling" (Dobrin, "Occupation" 21) may emerge differently within a larger and shared locale occupied by both fields. And, remembering Miller's construction of Composition's subject as a conglomeration of

“affective space,” epistemological content, and constellated human agents, the subject of writing can then be enacted (“realized,” in Miller’s terms) in the relations between participatory agents *in locus communis*.

### *1.2 Making Commonplace Writing Subjects, Writing-Subjects, and Subject-Positions (Or, On Composition’s Conceptual Pre-Occupations)*

The immediate difficulty of claiming writing and agents oriented toward its study as occupying subjects in Writing Studies is that both already occupy (though, not exclusively) the conceptual space of Composition and Rhetoric. That is, the subjects with which I might seek to actualize Writing Studies are pre-occupied, so speak, with and in Composition—why, among other reasons, I began with the delimiting claim that compositionists are here conceptualized as *potential* Writing Studies agents.<sup>3</sup> However, the emergence of Writing Studies as a new space in Composition for the study of writing, responsive to the always-changing conditions that structure new and old (de)limiting definitions of writing in Composition and Rhetoric, should be not be thought to provide or require a stable, determinate, unified “writing subject,” either in the Enlightenment sense or in the general claiming of writing as an obvious and named subject. Of course, this may be an uncomfortable trope of the phrase “writing subject.” It is used primarily as a way of quickly saying “the subject of writing,” but I have another aim in mind, as well.

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<sup>3</sup> Others, beyond compositionists, would then also be potential Writing Studies agents wherever they are “subject to” (occupied by and with) the study of writing—like those in, for example, Creative Writing, Journalism, Philosophy, Author Studies. Please see Chapter 5 for details.

The phrase “writing-subject” operates as a potentially problematic terministic screen in this context because compositionists have so long employed the phrase as a commonplace term to refer to a human subjectivity occupied by writing (either as the contentual subject or act of writing, both of which are, themselves, definitionally various). For example, as Raul Sanchez argues:

Both writing-as-notation and writing-as-knowing offer profiles of a writing subject familiar to people in composition studies. In the former, the writing subject [sic] is a secretary, sorting and recording the products of epistemological activities that have already occurred. In the latter, the writing-subject is a quasi-romantic figure for whom the act of writing is an epistemic exploration of individual and/or collective cultural practices. (35-36)

In either case, the enactive form the human subject takes on changes in relation to the form of writing with which it is occupied. So, as Sanchez argues, “composition theory begins to mark the next step in the writing subject’s progress when it redefines the writing subject not as a producer of writing but as a function of writing itself” (83). However, given the pre-occupation in Composition with the “writing subject” (both in the traditional sense and in reference to writing as a contentual subject), the political and locative factors at play in using it as an enactive and orientational mechanism for Writing Studies cannot be ignored.

Specifically in political and locative in terms, then, the work of actually defining that “writing subject” between Writing Studies and Composition includes the production and occupation of a subject-position of the kind Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré argue for in their landmark work, “Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves.” The subject-position of writing within and between either field “incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location” of the kind I have been arguing are at stake for

agents who are, themselves, already occupying a range of positions “within the structure of rights for those who use that repertoire” (89)—the rights of subjectifying writing and agents in relation to that subject. And this remains an orientational problem because, as the authors continue, “once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines, and concepts that are made relevant within the particular discursive practices in which they are positioned” (ibid). Where Writing Studies is enacted as a related, non-identical, occupiable space relative to Composition and Rhetoric, the occupation of writing as a central subject in both fields is conceptually possible and affords a degree of conceptual choice and political empowerment in position-taking and position-making in the space(s) a compositionist-subject might occupy in the study of writing *between* both fields.

As such, the prospect of enacting writing subjects in and for a Writing Studies that occupies some position within Composition and Rhetoric requires something like the making of “commonplaces.” However, I mean this less in the sense of devices “for discovering something previously unknown” (McKeon, “Creativity” 28) than as “the place in which the certainties of the familiar are brought into contact with the transformations of innovation” (McKeon, “Creativity” 35). And the end of these subject(ive) commonplaces is to enable meaningful *contact* more than utter *distinction*.

McKeon’s well-known example of this type of commonplace is creativity. Like “subjects” or “writing,” “a commonplace term like ‘creativity,’ is meaningless in isolation,” he writes. However,

when it is combined with another term in a statement, the statement may be true or false, and the term is ambiguous. When reasons are brought to warrant a meaning, the meaning of the term becomes a variable adjusted to the variations of other terms in the formulation of the argument. When principles are sought to ground the argument, the meaning of the term becomes a function of the system, and the doctrine of creativity becomes a comfortable commonplace in an established universe. (ibid)

Likewise, the statement that writing is an occupying subject in Writing Studies may be true or not, but even adding conceptual reasons to warrant the claim only begins to address the highly variable meaning of “writing” relative to the variations of “subject” and “occupation.” It is only when additional reasons are brought to warrant a meaning of the subject of writing—such as political reasons that complicate the occupation of that subject in and by Writing Studies and Composition—that we might productively seek “principles” with which “to ground the argument” that writing must become a commonplace subject *between* Writing Studies and Composition if either Writing Studies or its own writing subjects are to be enacted. In this way, “the meaning of the term becomes a function of the system” and can operate as not only “a comfortable commonplace in an established universe” of Composition but also a contentual mechanism by which the “universe” of Writing Studies may be established and claimed in its own right, with its own occupations, with its own subjects, and with its own subject-positions occupied by human agents.

## **2. Definition and Occupation of More-Than-Text Writing Subjects In More-Than-Language Spaces**

### *2.1 “Meaning” and “Ending” Writing and Writing Studies (Or, On the Writing Subject Writ-Larger-Than-Language)*

Enacting Writing Studies by occupying the commonplace writing subject is a definitional prospect based in language and space, given the semantic and functional relationships between field-spaces and the subjects that occupy them. After all, “when we speak of space, we necessarily speak of what and how that space is occupied” (Dobrin, “Occupation” 19). Considering Henri Lefebvre’s contention in *The Production of Space* that spaces are essentially meaningless when observed by themselves (much like commonplace terms, via McKeon), the subjects and space of Writing Studies lose a great deal of potentially actionable meaning when observed in isolation rather than as occupying a position in or relative to Composition and Rhetoric. Dobrin argues that “the simple follow up” to Lefebvre’s claim “would be to say that spaces are defined by their occupation and that the identities of those occupiers/occupations—here I am speaking both in terms of subjectivity and physical occupation—are defined by the spaces they occupy” (“Occupation” 19-20).

For one example, this definitional reciprocity can be seen in compositionists’ expansionist arguments, paradoxically, for the dis-occupation or removal of the “romanticized, hermeneutic subject,” which Sanchez argues, “pervades composition studies, constraining attempts to theorize the reproduction and circulation of writing” (86). Dobrin observes, “the subject for composition studies largely evolved as a concept

from the early neo-romantics who created student-centered thinking” (*Postcomposition* 73) but argues that, in institutional, disciplinary, and curricular terms, the subject problematically defines Composition:

[T]he primacy of the student subject in composition studies results not from a genuine disciplinary interest in students as subjects, in students as writers, or even in subjects in general but grows from the simple fact that subjects are the primary capital of composition studies. . . . It is, we must admit, much easier to identify and control this capital, particularly when the field retains the right of subjectification of the student under the guise of writing instruction, than it is to control something as amorphous and problematic as writing. (*Postcomposition* 74)

Dobrin argues that this recognition warrants change, both to the occupational primacy of the student-subject in our work and to the definition of the field and discipline. “Once we are able to dispense with the subject as central,” he writes, “composition studies is no longer composition studies; its future is one of postcomposition,” and argues that “such a change also invokes a recognition that composition studies’ past is not necessarily as we have told ourselves it was; our past is one not of writing but of subject” (*Postcomposition* 73).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For another example—one that more explicitly treats the specialized disciplinarity entailed with this concern, consider Sharon Crowley’s claims that “disciplines like medicine and engineering create what Foucault called ‘relations of governmentality,’ wherein a technology or power creates and controls a technology of the self—the engineer, the doctor . . . This relation of governmentality regulates teaching in these disciplines in such a way that the predisciplinarity subjectivities of students and teachers are less important to their practice than they are in composition instruction. That is to say, the subjectivity we call ‘doctor’ or ‘engineer’ is expected to replace, to some extent, the predisciplinary subjectivities with which students embark upon the study of medicine or engineering. However, in first-year composition instruction, students’ predisciplinary subjectivities are the very materials with which they and their teachers are expected to work” (216).



I do not argue that enacting a field of Writing Studies does or does not require the study of writing to the exclusion of student subjects—only that the subject(ive) content of Composition and Rhetoric (whether as the kind of Postcomposition argued for by Dobrin and other postprocess theorists or not) bears on the definition of content in/and the occupation of Writing Studies. For example, assuming we accept Dobrin’s premise, enacting a Postcomposition field and orientation would likely entail a shift in subject(ive) focus *away* from the student subject and toward the more “amorphous and problematic” figure of “writing” beyond or without consideration of the writing *student* such that Writing Studies might even come to be defined *as* Postcomposition. That is, because the definitional relationship between fields and their subjects is mutually recursive and iterative, a Writing Studies field may be defined and enacted by defining writing as a central subject that occupies the space of the field, with or without student writers. And that writing subject would also be part of its “capital,” in Dobrin’s terms, along with whatever human agents we might identify as those occupied by its study.

However, beyond being generally “amorphous and problematic” as a subject, the already successful enactment of compositionists’ many orientations to writing means that the definitional enactment of writing has become decidedly various (e.g., writing as literacy, as process, as product, as rhetoric, as a range of genres, etc.). As described by David Smit in *The End of Composition*:

Historically, the field has conceptualized what we mean by “writing” beyond the sentence level in a number of ways. Each of the following formulations had a certain currency during a particular period and then was succeeded by another formulation: the textual rules and conventions of various forms of discourse; a composing process, the cognitive process, a rhetorical practice—that is, sensitivity to the elements of those exigencies that call for a written response: a

particular rhetorical situation or context, the audience or readers the writer must address, the genre forms which seem most appropriate under the circumstances—and finally, the currently most popular concept, a social or cultural phenomenon. (17)

And, as he observes, the occupations of Composition by the constellation of these has helped to reshape the field as each “writing” has been enacted in our scholarship, institutions, and pedagogy.

As such, defining Writing Studies as a field occupied by “writing” does not solve the problems of enactment or occupation. When occupying a position in the positive (dis)orientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric, the term already means too much to not also *limit* its enactment, that of the field, and that of its work. For example, as Smit observes:

The foremost limitation to composition studies may well be the very nature of “writing,” that when we talk about the teaching of “writing” we are saying, in Wittgenstein’s terms, “*nothing whatever*”; unless we have explained exactly *what* distinction we wish to make.” Moreover, the difficulty of characterizing writing, particularly in a way that will illuminate how it ought to be taught, may be a problem we will always have with us: it may not be solved by greater insight or further research. (18, emphasis in the original)

To state things more emphatically, this difficulty *will* always be with us because neither terministic meaning, nor the characteristics of subjects (writing or otherwise) or our orientations to them are determinate. But what we actually *do* in relation to these meanings, characterizations, and orientations is partially determined by them. So, “greater insight” and “further research” may never provide for us a final, determinate solution to the equation  $X = \text{Writing}$  because “X” is ultimately a semantic and enactive *placeholder* for something that is meaningfully *and* teleologically variable.

In Smit's configuration, the problem is that the variability of writing specifically makes it difficult to say how it ought to be enacted in pedagogy (relative to a "pedagogical orientation" to writing that is). So, while there is an unavoidable Wittgensteinian language game implicated in defining writing, that game is itself an issue not just of meaning but also of occupational ends, as Smit's discussion of the naming of the book from which the above quotations come brings further to light.<sup>5</sup> "Of course, my title, *The End of Composition Studies*, is a play on the meaning of 'end'," he writes (1). And, as an organizing metaphor for his project, that bit of play predicts his attempt to:

define the nature of a large enterprise, to determine its purpose or scope, and to explore several meanings of an "end": a destination or goal; an outcome, result, or consequence; and of course—a meaning that has special resonance for the *field* of composition and rhetoric—a teleological "reason for being," Aristotle's final cause. (ibid, my emphasis)

And this sense of an end is a crucial enactive question, one that cannot help but come to the fore in defining writing as an occupying subject of Writing Studies in/and Composition.

Unlike defining terms in general, defining terms as subjects has significant bearing on the enactments and occupations of fields, of agents in the affective space of those subjects, and of the institutions that manifest those fields and their subject(ive)

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<sup>5</sup> A caveat here would be that Wittgenstein ultimately rejects definition, particularly in *Philosophical Investigations*. So, from this perspective, "the game" to be played in defining writing is less to more finally define it (in the sense of abstracting a universal meaning for the term) because "there is no reason to look, as we have done traditionally—and dogmatically—for one, essential core in which the meaning of a word is located and which is, therefore, common to all uses of that word" (Biletzki and Matar n. pag.). Instead, we should be after something more—how the meanings "writing" takes on allow the term to enable our actions as agents in its field and bear on the political and occupational stakes at play in claiming writing as a subject, more than as only a term.

orientations. As an enactive component, the “end” of writing as a *subject* is to precede and direct our actions, and so suggests an “end” of both Writing Studies in/and Composition as spaces defined by the study and teaching of *something* termed “writing,” however variously defined (e.g., writing as process, literacy, learning, rhetoric). For example, we can define the *term* “writing,” however variously, with recourse to the anti-positivist, Wittgensteinian principle that the meaning of a word is its use in the language. And, by extension, the various meanings that word takes on as it is used in a language reshape the language in which those meanings are occupied. However, defining that word as, for example, the inscription of linguistic marks on a page or as the rhetorically situated process of constructing texts will generally have more significant effects on a person’s actions and experience wherever that person is meaningfully occupied with either some end relative to these or other definitions (such as the acts of consuming, producing, teaching, or researching something defined as “writing”) and/or to the degree that that person occupies a subject-position in some field in which agents have a significant stake in the term’s definition—e.g., Composition or Writing Studies.

Though Smit may well be right in that “composition studies has not taken seriously the conceptual difficulties involved in deciding just what writing is in the first place” (17), the potential of defining writing as an occupying subject is greater than the sum its meaning(s) in the language of compositionists because the function of writing as a field-subject extends beyond but does not exclude its use in discourse. That is, the definition of writing as a subject is not *only* a problem of its meaning and use in language. And how we enact the space of its field(s), ourselves as its agents, and the

capital with which we operate politically and institutionally is immediately at stake because the capacity to define writing as a subject will significantly shape Writing Studies and help to define who we are and what we do as agents therein.

## *2.2 Pre- and Re-Occupied with Defining the More-Than-Text of Writing (Or, On the Occupation of Process in/and the University)*

Where defining writing is an enactive enterprise, more than merely a semantic-conceptual project, the problem of defining the subject of writing in this way comes into practical contact with the identities, pedagogies, and institutional capital of compositionists. Among the most commonplace features of writing's definition in modern Composition is an emphasis on its being variously "more than text," and this bears significantly on the oriented beliefs, occupations, and identifications of both Writing Studies, Composition, and their agents.

For example, Michael Carter argues that it is a "foundational belief underlying the discipline" of Composition "that writing *can* be defined" (102, emphasis in the original) and that this matters, enactively, because:

As people who profess writing, . . . who we are and what we do is determined by what it means to write. If writing is an act defined by the markings of text, then we are defined by those marks, accountable for what is most obvious about writing. But if writing is also something else that is beyond the technology [of] text, then we are defined by that something as well. I think that one of the issues that has *occupied* us as a discipline for the last forty years or so is defining that something beyond the text. We challenged the hegemony of text by declaring writing a process; we have labeled it a cognitive act, a social act, an ideological act. It could be argued, in fact that our field has been profoundly shaped by the firm belief that writing is much more than text." (ibid, my emphasis)

Beyond having cultural currency at various points in Composition's history (and present), each of these more-than-text definitions of writing has, in part, potentialized and shaped Composition and Rhetoric, the actions we take, and our institutional and scholarly identities as compositionists. Likewise, the various more-than-text definitions that have occupied us collectively represent not only attempts to define "who we are and what we do" but, as responses to a belief in the possibility of and/or need for defining writing in the field, point also to exigencies related to the occupational value of enacting those definitions in practice.

Consider, for example, the more-than-text definition of writing as process, which is certainly among the most influential more-than-texts used to define the subject of writing in Composition, as well as to define the subject(ive) identities and responsibilities of the field and of its agents. However, the occupation of mid- and latter-20<sup>th</sup> century compositionists with researching questions of, and theorizing about, the role and nature of writing defined as a process did not arise *ex nihilo*. It came generally in response to an (dis)orientational exigency felt/recognized among teachers of writing in the University, particularly those occupying teaching-subject positions in First-Year Composition. Instructors were occupied with exigent questions of process as a result of their (pre)occupations and needed to develop and enact definitions of writing-as-process in order to better fulfill the responsibilities of those positions.

In part, this exigency arose from an a(nta)gonistic response to the constricting, final-cause-oriented definitions of writing offered by Current-Traditional models and secular humanist/literary studies subjectivities, which no longer seemed to correspond to

the increasingly pragmatist and anti-formalist values and pedagogies of the field.<sup>6</sup>

Against the one, as Robert Connors writes, “the very name of the ‘process movement’ emphasizes becoming over being, process over product, and thus continuing experience over final judgment” (*Composition-Rhetoric* 67). And against the other, process offered occupying subject(ive) content with which to challenge, for example, “the humanist claim upon composition . . . typically enacted through the practice of requiring students to read literary texts in the first-year composition course” as idealized textual products or methods by which to instantiate a particular subjectivity in students via writing’s pre-occupation in English (as Literature) (Miller, *Composition in the University* 13).

Generally, as Miller argues, this “supplied an ultimately repressive ideal, in the form of perfectly written texts, without exposing the precise ways these texts have become publically successful, so that its students may measure their own inadequacies for full

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<sup>6</sup> I say “in part” because this exigency was and is not the sole motivator. Potential participants in any developing field moving toward but not having yet achieved full disciplinarity are likely be motivated also by a much more basic desire to get oriented and to more fully occupy the field with and by subjects, as in the case of Writing Studies in this project. For example, as Lisa Ede recounts in a narrative about her own changing occupations, “when I ‘converted’ from literature to composition in the mid-1970s, the scholarly field of composition studies did not exist—at least not in any conventional sense” (x). Entering a field that, however individually, might represent uncharted territory tends to bring out an exigent disorientation brought on by attempting to occupy a position, in Ede’s case, in a Composition field that “did not exist” (was not yet fully enacted). And this, in turn, provides its own exigency for the creation and definition of subjects with and by which to enact that field and its work. Thus, the emergence of the writing-as-process subject might *also* be seen as a response to just such a recursive exigency—much as and for the same basic reasons I have argued for the construction of writing (and others) as subjects, as orientational mechanisms with which to occupy Writing Studies. And these may allow, if not exactly produce, a recursive exigency in response to which compositionists might “convert” to whatever degree to Writing Studies from contemporary Composition and Rhetoric and bring about those agents’ own enactments.

participation in the textual world.”<sup>7</sup> And, in response, enacting and re-occupying Composition with the more-than-text writing subject as process was largely successful. “The process movement in composition served us well,” writes Gary Olson before providing a page-long list of ways that defining writing as a process exploded and shaped 20<sup>th</sup> century Composition’s range of inquiry and pedagogical orientations, citing everything from the now foundational concern with recursivity and impacts on the assessment of student work to further (re)definitions of writing enabled by (though, not necessarily caused by) its definition as process—such as an early focus on writing as an “activity, an act that is itself composed of a variety of activities” and writing as a “means of learning and discovery” connected to a range of rhetorical concerns like “audience, purpose, and context” (“Toward a Post-Process” 7).

Again, though, this is not simply a question of what writing (or process) means in the language of compositionists. It is a demonstration of the orientational and occupational value of *enacting* the subject of writing and its field(s) via some particular more-than-text and then acting in relation to that definition. Of course, “as several ‘post-process’ scholars have pointed out . . . the process *orientation* has its own limitations,”

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<sup>7</sup> Note the foregrounding of the political register of occupation here—the right to subjectify students in particular ways (vis-à-vis, Dobrin). But note also the occupational politics at play in terms of the commonplace pre-occupation of Composition in the space of “English departments” such that those who had, at least at that point in Composition’s history, “spoken most frequently for composition ha[d] been literary scholars” (Miller, *Composition in the University* 10). English-as-Literature occupied a position of considerably greater political and institutional power than did Composition in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century and so could, in Dobrin’s terms, claim Composition and hegemonically engage in the ideological struggle to inscribe meaning into it, to partially define or reify its work and place in the department—to occupy Composition and claim it as part of English-as-Literature’s capital in the University.



echoing Carter that a grounding position in Composition is that writing can be actually defined in the first place, specifically in that “the process orientation, as we have conceived it, imagines that the writing process can be described in some way” (Olson 7, my emphasis). But, however much maligned in the field since, this move became, as Lester Faigely argues, “the engine of disciplinary success that gained academic respectability and institutional standing for composition studies” (49) and so a) defined some of what compositionists were responsible for in the University, b) helped shape a successful disciplinary identity for the field and its agents, and c) provided that field some of its own distinct epistemological content and initial institutional capital as that definition was enacted in compositionists’ practice (research, program-building, and instruction).

However, writing was and still is a *commonplace* subject *between* the space of Composition and the space of the University, and so changed or changing definitions of the writing subject as process in Composition (or as any other more-than-text definition of the subject) did not erase its terministic screening and meaning elsewhere in the language(s) of the Academy. As Sharon Crowley noted in the late 1990s, “ostensibly, academics in all disciplines want the first-year writing course to teach students how to write,” but, as a defining occupation, “here, *writing* seems to mean that students are supposed to master principles of arrangement and sentence construction; they are also to

learn grammar and usage” (7), rather than a complex system of process and its associated concerns.<sup>8</sup>

### **3. Occupying and Enacting the Writing Subject Writ-Large(r-Than-Writing)**

#### *3.1 (N)on Novelty (Or, the Multimodal Writing Subject Between Composition and Writing Studies)*

“When an accepted definition of a concept no longer corresponds with the circumstances,” writes Jodie Nicotra, “it limits or constricts the field of possibility in which that definition is operational” (W260). And so the (de)limiting definition of writing in the space of the University has some bearing on the “field of possibility” for the study and teaching of writing by compositionists in that space. How, then, might we understand the occupational and identificatory prospects and problems of defining writing—and of enacting its definition in academic spaces—in terms of more contemporary, much less restrictive more-than-text constructions? Though Composition

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<sup>8</sup> This is, of course, still often true today, and many of us see this still occurring at our own universities. For example, at a recent faculty meeting devoted to possible changes in the core curriculum and the role of the program in which I teach (the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Colorado) would play in those changes, two representatives from the interdisciplinary faculty committee charged with leading the update perfectly enacted the problem I have just described. In one fell swoop, both scholars (one in Biology, the other in Spanish Language and Literatures) said that they and many others across campus fully supported our work in response to our having provided a series of curriculum requests and arguments for our value to the university and its core based on a collective definition of the subject of writing in our program as a complex set of situational, medium-responsive, rhetorical, and genre-based literacies and practices, the teaching and study of which contribute enormously to the university’s retention and successful graduation of students and to those students’ academic, social, and professional success—and then decried the “fact” that students in their classes “can’t write,” by which, based on their descriptions of the problem, referred to the ability to compose grammatically sound sentences with appropriate punctuation on timed exams.

and Rhetoric has now been long pre-occupied with defining writing as process (and not)—and then occupied also with the myriad additional subjects and capital that writing as process has helped bring to the field and its disciplinarity—a more contemporary more-than-text definition of the subject of writing is beginning to redefine the nature and place of our enterprise.

Writing as multimodal or writing as composing, where “composing” in the language of compositionists often refers to a multimodally constituted “composition-writ-large(r-than-writing)” subject, is a powerful and more recent writing-definition on the rise.<sup>9</sup> And, just as with writing as process before it, this more novel writing subject has practical and institutional implications for the enactment and occupational capital of Composition and Rhetoric, particularly in terms of how writing is taught and conceived of in the Academy—but also for the potential occupational and orientational relations between Composition and Writing Studies in the space of the University.

Defining writing as more-than-text (and more-than-language) is obviously nothing new, but the broad enactment of that subject(ive)-position specifically relative to multimodality/digitality in pedagogy and in programmatic spaces is a fairly recent and complex phenomenon. Even as the writing subject and the occupation of Composition and Rhetoric is being constricted to a certain degree by the more constricting definitions

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<sup>9</sup> Please note, I am referring here to the contemporary *colloquial* sense of “multimodal composition” now operative in the language of compositionists, which at least in colloquial discourse in the field and often in pedagogical practice, refers less to the kinds of rhetorically constituted sense of “modes” operative in Current-Traditional rhetorics and more to the employment of non- or extra-linguistic modes of communication and persuasion in a given text, or which, nearly as often, functions as a synonym for “digital composition.”

of writing and Composition at play in the University, the multimodal expansion takes place as compositionists continue to be practically occupied with and defined by the prospect of defining writing in less determinate and less restrictive terms. As Nicotra writes:

Such a constriction seems to be happening right now in the field of writing . . . In asking the question, “what is writing?” then, I’m interested less in the question of essences (“what is writing *really*?”) than in the rhetorical prospects of expanding the concept (“what does the current definition enable or prevent?”). Thus, though we are not interested in redefining “writing” once and for all, what gets counted as “writing” makes a difference to what we study as a field, what we teach in writing classrooms, and how we conceive writing programs. (W260-61)

Her primary demonstration comes from Andrea Lunsford’s keynote address to the 2005 Computers and Writing Conference. For Lauer, *the* subject of Composition may be more literacies than writing, but the need to capaciously redefine writing remains critical as both an enactive pedagogical tool and a grounding for her own and others’ occupations with the literacies that compositionists are charged with teaching in a digital age.

As she says, “to describe such literacies, we need more expansive definitions of writing along with a flexible critical vocabulary and catalogue of the writing and rhetorical situations that call for amplified, performative, and embodied discourses of many different kinds” (170). To do so, she offers the following expansive definition:

*Writing*: A technology for creating conceptual frameworks and creating, sustaining, and *performing* lines of thought within those frameworks, drawing from and expanding on existing conventions and genres, utilizing signs and symbols, incorporating materials drawn from multiple sources, and taking advantage of the resources of a full range of media. (171, emphasis in the original)

This is a semantic endeavor, certainly—but it is also enactive, exigent, occupational, and metaphoric. Lunsford uses this definition as an enactive operator to warrant, essentially,

an argument about students in her *Writing* and Rhetoric program at Stanford studying and producing digitally-assisted and/or digitally constructed “presentations” enacted *as* “writing” and in the *service* of developing a range of contemporary literacies.

“The novelty of Lunsford’s definition,” Nicotra writes, “lies in its attempt to create a new *metaphor* for writing” (W261, my emphasis), and that metaphor is distinctly expansive and multimodal. This novelty is less in the use of metaphor as a definitional tool, less even in that, “to modify traditional and still-dominant notions of writing as static and linear, Lunsford calls for a metaphor that is . . . more dynamic (performative)” but that the metaphor she provides is “*spatial*: writing in this redefinition is a technology for creating ‘conceptual frameworks’ that create and channel thought in particular ways” (W261, emphasis in the original).<sup>10</sup> Grounding her claim in Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor theories to say that changing metaphors is not merely a simple semantic issue but one that has significant consequence for our thought and behavior (“as we speak, so we believe, so we act”), she claims “evidence that the metaphor for writing is shifting from one that is linear and time-bound (i.e. process) to one that is more spatial or architectural signals profound differences in the possibilities for imagining how we think and how we act vis-à-vis writing” (W264).

Of course, this is only a single instance of definitional-enactment by an individual scholar/teacher of “writing,” but the enlargement of the subject of writing in Composition

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that this particular novelty is not restricted to Lunsford but is resident to a larger shift in the spatiality of definitions being used to reorient compositionists to writing in locative terms. Please see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion, or, for an immediate example, see the recent *College Composition and Communications* double-issue on “Locations of Writing,” which asks not only after the importance of the locations *of* writing but after writing *as* locative.

via spatial and multimodal metaphors has also profound implications for its institutional identity, capital, and place in the University. In a relatively recent programmatic study on the potential of multimodality in the curricular space of a University *Writing Program*, “Creating a Multimodal Element in WRIT Courses at the University of Denver,” the authors observe that:

There is a familiar spot for writing or composition courses in the academy. Whether or not faculty across campus actually understand what’s being taught in writing courses, they take those courses as a familiar part of the academic landscape. Faculty believe that writing well is important, and so it seems a given that composition courses have a spot (though if only they’d be more successful!). It threatens the stability of things to say that the writing course is about Composition Writ Large, that is, about making not only written texts but also those featuring modes beyond or instead of words. The cost is one of clarity or identity for the program. Now, this very well could be a cost worth sustaining, as a new identity is created to replace the old. Still, there may be misunderstandings among our colleagues across campus about our choice to teach these technologies (worst case scenario: “If the writing program would just focus on writing, we wouldn’t be getting papers with these errors from our sophomore/junior/senior students”). (Campbell, Daniels, Hesse et al 8)

Keeping in mind that this passage is not presented in the report as a comment on the state of affairs in the wider field, demonstratively, we see here an important acknowledgement of an orientation to “writing courses” (and a writing program) as occupying a non-novel, “familiar” space in the “academic landscape.” But “it threatens the stability of things to say that the writing course is about Composition Writ Large,” which, defined relative to that subject’s occupation in a “writing course,” is the institutional and curricular project of studying and teaching the “making not only written texts but also those featuring modes beyond or instead of words.” In the existing space of the University, that composition-writ-large(r-than-writing) subject may not correspond well with others’ perceptions of the subject and of the occupations of courses and programs defined by and

valued their work with a much more (de)limited “writing.” And that challenge is certainly at play in the wider field.

That is, this more novel definition of the subject of the writing course, that which it is “about,” challenges the stability provided by the pre-occupying definition of the writing *course* and the writing *program* in which that course is institutionally occupied. It comes with a “cost.” The writing subject defined more restrictively as the making of written texts featuring linguistic modes of communication and persuasion (or, more frustratingly, a subject defined by the occupation of training students in the making of “papers [free of] these errors”) remains “important” to “faculty across campus” as commonplace capital *between* Composition and Rhetoric and the University—capital through which it has been, for many years, “a given that composition courses have a spot.” Compositionists occupying institutional positions in programs attendant to the composition-writ-large(r-than-writing) subject may choose to simply ignore any notion held by others that “the writing program [should] just focus on writing.” But those programs are not likely to be unaffected by potential challenges to the political power and institutional capital they have gained by claiming the subject of writing on campus when that subject may appear to others to no longer correspond with that for which those programs and their occupations are currently valued.

At present, of course, the addition of multimodal elements in “writing” courses and programs has not meant—and will not mean—that such programs and courses do not continue to claim the subject of writing in academic space, along with the institutional position that occupational capital provides. But that addition does mean that individual

programs, and potentially Composition and Rhetoric more broadly, may need to expend capital and accrue new institutional identities and further capital with which to buy, so to speak, institutional support and acceptance for a broadening subject(ive) occupation beyond the work of studying and teaching a more (de)limited writing subject. And the accrual of new capital and the construction of an institutionally identifiable occupation that includes *both* a more *and* less (de)limited writing subject is likely to be advantageous.

For example, writing programs and Composition and Rhetoric more broadly will certainly benefit from the establishment of a new occupational identity, in terms of the breadth of subjects its agents are supported in researching and teaching. But, wherever the occupying subject defining that identity is institutionally perceived as “not writing” in a University structure that is politically and materially invested in the teaching of a much more restricted form of “writing” (“Johnny can’t write” certainly still lives), we will have to fight, to some degree, to establish both the value and our curricular ownership of less restrictive and emergent subjects, occupations, and identities *in* that University structure. And the more (de)limited subject, which is unlikely to be excised from the identity and institutional occupation of contemporary Composition, its programs, and curricula simply because we are now *also* occupied with the study of more than “just writing,” remains valuable capital that may be used in that fight. Further, I would argue that enacting Writing Studies through occupation by more (de)limited writing subjects may well provide a *space* for that capital in Composition.



### *3.2 Beside Multimodal Writing and Before It in the “End” (Or, On the Co- and Post-Occupation of Writing Studies and the Writing Subject)*

The first purpose of enacting Writing Studies within contemporary Composition and Rhetoric is to provide an oriented and orienting space that may be occupied by contentual and human subjects—but not all enactments are orienting, and secondary ends (identificatory, political, and conceptual) are of value for Composition as it expands. Enacting and getting oriented in Writing Studies through commonplace subjects (like writing) within the field of a multimodally-reconstituted composition-writ-large(r) is as much a subject(ive) as an occupational and (dis)orientational prospect. And that prospect bears on the actual potential of Writing Studies to provide an occupiable space a) for writing and human subjects devoted to its study and b) in which to develop a distinct identity, to accrue capital, and to act. And attempting to do so is most worthwhile, practically, when we attend to the conceptual, political, institutional, and identity issues at play in the game.

For example, defining writing through institutional and curricular naming relative to the multimodal metaphor and expansion is not just a semantic project. It clearly has the potential to be bot substantially and subject(ive)ly orienting for many compositionists and disorienting for others, and so, to influence the occupations and actions of agents and academic programs. The metaphor grounds and warrants classroom practices and claims in favor of, for example, the teaching of digital presentation genres (e.g., Lunsford) or other multimodal components in first-year writing courses (e.g., at the University of Denver), as much as any future-critical depiction of Composition as needing to be

responsive to new and more public domains of composing (e.g., Yancey's "Made Not Only of Words: Composition in a New Key" 2004 CCCC address). But this enactment of a digital/multimodal subject of Composition and Rhetoric *within* the space of "writing" courses and programs is also potentially disorienting.

21<sup>st</sup> century Composition and Rhetoric has increasingly posited writing as not just *a* form of composing, as had been traditional, but as *many* different forms of composing. Various multimodal compositions now commonly, though not universally, occupy our scholarship and classrooms, enacted as being not so much *analogous to* but *as* "writing"—and, so, have become disciplinarily sanctioned and productive subjects in a field that still claims "Writing Studies" as its self-same. It could be argued, then, that the use of "Writing Studies" to rename and define Composition is not just potentially restricting, in general, but that it is problematic and potentially disorienting because it is simply anachronistic.<sup>11</sup>

We may, of course, be tempted to argue that the kind of multimodal compositions listed above still certainly *include* writing, defined more restrictively—but this more proves the point than counters it. For example, we might say that teaching students to compose a digital-essay-as-website requires not only that we teach a rhetorical awareness of things like visuals, hyperlinks, and the like, but that it *also* requires the teaching of writing because we want students to be able to produce and utilize effective web-copy as part of their websites/digital essays. But, in doing so, we manifest a recognition that whatever visual and digital rhetorics we might want to teach are somehow non-identical

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<sup>11</sup> Please see Chapters 1 and 2 for a detailed discussion in terms of the (dis)orientational complex of Writing Studies and Composition.

to writing. I do not, of course, mean to suggest that other warrants—particularly, technological, social, institutional, and curricular—do not significantly contribute to Composition’s enactment of multimodal composing *as* writing. I mean only to suggest that the capacious metaphorization of writing in the language and work of Composition and Rhetoric has both partially enabled and participated in the enactment of what the field is currently in the process of becoming relative to this newer subject(ive) occupation—*less* a “Writing Studies” and *more* a “Composition-Writ-Large(r-Than-Writing).”

If the space of Composition is defined through its occupation by and of subjects that are defined and enacted as “writing” primarily by a function of an increasingly capacious metaphor, it is no longer (only) Writing Studies. So, defining Composition and Rhetoric *as* Writing Studies may have orientational potential but also complicates either field’s occupations and the relations between them by a function of Composition’s more-than-(just)-writing subject. Where Composition is occupied by this particular more-than-writing subject and its enactment in our work and programmatic spaces, the field may then be reasonably observed to be a space in which agents are oriented by the definitional proposition that various multimodal and digital forms of composing simultaneously *are* and *are-not* writing. And, by extension, the co-occupation of writing and not-writing may then ground the (dis)orientational capacity of contemporary Composition for those agents oriented to Writing Studies as non-identical to Composition and Rhetoric *in locus communis*.

As a compositionist, that is, I am potentially *less* likely to feel the need to ask: where I study and teach the production of primarily linguistic texts, how do I comfortably say that I am communally engaged with (occupied by) the “same” subject as my colleagues who study and teach the production of digital games, video, and other multimodal texts? But I am, perhaps, *more* likely tempted to say that Composition is in the process of becoming an architectonic space in which I might be occupied with the study of *anything* as writing once uncoupled from words and written-texts—though it is unlikely that this should actually stop me from attending to a *less* capacious defined writing in a *less* architectonic space therein.

The distinct writing subject of Writing Studies, if we looked merely to produce difference, would then likely be a *less* capacious version—writing as linguisemantic, alphabetic text, whether on page or screen. And we might then predict that a Writing Studies field—defined by that more (de)limited occupation—would also be occupied by any number of our colleagues in department meetings who might like to say “I study *writing*—digital video, audio-remix, video games, websites, etc. are not in my purview,” along with any number of books, articles, journals, and other artifacts occupied with and making claims about this more (de)limited writing-figure.<sup>12</sup> The Writing Studies field, as a result, would likely be enacted as a space that advantages the study of writing via a *less* capacious definitional metaphor and would potentially provide our *more* linguisemantic/alphabetic-textually-oriented participants with a paradoxically “new” space in which to occupy themselves.

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<sup>12</sup> Please see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of the identification of agents and texts as being definitively those of Writing Studies—and not.

I say *paradoxically* “new” because this seems most easily construed as a reassertion of the “old.” However, it is not *only* old—not the same. As Dobrin writes, “occupations may change over time, but inscribed meanings may not be erased for all who know a place” (“Occupation” 20-21), and so would be, in a Heraclitusian sense, a kind of stepping into the same stream twice. The meaning of a *less* capacious defined writing subject is changed by its occupation *within* a space now also occupied by a *more* capacious one alongside it. Studying a more (de)limited writing, in a Writing Studies within an already expanding Composition, may specifically (though, partially) mean *not* (or at least *less*) studying a composition-writ-large(r-than-writing) subject, but still relative to that larger subject as the space and occupation of Composition and Rhetoric expands. And, as an enacted field so occupied in the changed space of Composition, Writing Studies may provide, additionally, a touchstone of difference for compositionists *not* occupying a subject-position in Writing Studies to become somewhat *less* disoriented. Therein, such compositionists may be *more* able to what they are facing without necessarily needing to account for the study of writing other than as a sub-field *within* a Composition and Rhetoric that is defined by the study of many forms of composing, writing simply *among* them.

As such, the question of Writing Studies having its own distinct subjects (as both epistemological content and human agents devoted to it) must entail a clear sense of the interplay between the spaces and occupations of writing and other subjects, and between the orientations and definitional enactments that come as a result of the occupation of those subjects. Further, we must also be responsive to the (f)act of Composition’s

increasingly capacious defining of writing through the multimodal metaphor because the uptake of that metaphor makes it more likely that a Writing Studies field *therein* will produce few, if any, particularly novel and even *more* capacious definitions.

In fact, the novelty of an emergent Writing Studies definition of the subject of writing may well represent and lead to a *less* capacious enactment and occupation—novel only in that it may provide a space within an expanding Composition and Rhetoric for those who would define and be defined by, who would enact and be enacted by, the study of writing specifically *against* the capacious, metaphoric writing of the *rest* of contemporary Composition. The solution, then, is not to aim our sights at a “final” endpoint definition of writing *or* Writing Studies. The way forward is in understanding how enacting a more-than-writing subject in Composition—in a context in which Writing Studies is no longer defined as (and so no longer or at least less, in Nicotra’s terms, constricting the “field of possibility” of) Composition and Rhetoric—enables the occupation of a paradoxically new space of writing and agents *after* the old (that is, following from it) in a complex geography emergent *between* both fields.

## CHAPTER FOUR

*On Acting As-Though-In Place: Approximating, Surrounding,  
and Mapping Writing Studies with/in Composition and Elsewhere*

As a writer, then, I have had this place as my fate. For me, it was never a question of *finding* a subject, but rather of learning what to do with the subject I had had from the beginning and could not escape. . . . But here I either had to struggle with these problems or not write. I was so intricately dependent on this place that I did not begin in any meaningful sense to be a writer until I began to see the place clearly and for what it was.

— Wendell Berry, from *The Long-Legged House*, 2012.

If the study of writing subjects is the first occupation of orienting and enacting Writing Studies within contemporary Composition and Rhetoric, the way I have approached that problem in the preceding chapter certainly makes space a close second. As Dobrin observes, echoing Nedra Reynolds in *Geographies of Writing*, it has become a commonplace metaphor in modern Composition that “writing is itself space, a spatial phenomenon” (*Postcomposition* 56). However, Reynolds argues, “spatial metaphors are problematic in so far as they presume that space is not” (11). So, my goal here is not to further investigate writing as a subject with which *to* enact Writing Studies in Composition but to take up some of the problems and potentials of enacting *with* and *in* Writing Studies through spatial metaphors. That is, in the previous chapter, I was primarily concerned with the use of one spatial metaphor, occupation, as a method by which to approach the problem of enacting a distinct Writing Studies from the *outside* (from a position in Composition)—here I am concerned with the use of spatial metaphors and their operations to enact from *within*, and with some of the inventionary, academic/pedagogical, and disciplinary stakes of doing so.

For example, approaching enactment, itself, as a spatial metaphor for “local action” in terms of two others, space and place, is immediately useful in this context. As Robert Brooke and Jason McIntosh argue, “actively conceptualizing the spaces in which we live, and the existing mental maps through which we subconsciously ‘see’ space, can be a step toward taking local action. Such active conceptualizing of space is a necessary prerequisite to writing *inside, in relationship to, or for* a place” (133, emphasis in the original). However, this is immediately difficult given that, as Yi-Fu Tuan writes, both



“‘space’ and ‘place’ are familiar words denoting common experience. . . . Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask” (3). In short form, then, the practical value of actively conceptualizing Writing Studies and mapping it into contemporary Composition and Rhetoric as a *space* in which subjects (both human agents and disciplinary, curricular, or institutional content) can “live” is that doing so is a step toward acting “inside, in relationship to, or for” Writing Studies as a *place* in which agents can work and ask questions “locally.” Moving from space to place enables en-acting, acting *as though in* Writing Studies.

Of course, “distinguishing between places and spaces may seem confusing and contradictory, yet seeing the two as distinct yet enmeshed is crucial to understanding the role of places and spaces in the occupation(s) of composition” (Dobrin, “Occupation” 16), and so of acting *as though in* a Writing Studies occupied therein. “Space,” writes Reynolds, “is the more conceptual notion” (181) and refers to a location that, in Dobrin’s rendering, “has not (yet) been given meaning; it awaits occupation” (“Occupation” 17). Space is “yet to be written” because it “is potential” (*ibid.*). Places, on the other hand, as Christopher Keller and Christian Weisser argue, echoing a commonplace in spatial theory, “are *bounded areas endowed with human meaning*” (3, emphasis in the original).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase “spatial theory” can be disorienting, in this context. In general, we are dealing with spatial theory/scholarship whenever we approach problems primarily in place-based or space-based terms. The field of Spatial Studies is broadly interdisciplinary (drawing on and enacted within Architectural Studies, Geography, Cultural Anthropology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Geometry, Sociology, and others), but the term “spatial theory” is most

Places are those areas, physical or metaphorical, that provide a *where* for our occupations to occur—but places are also “‘tools’ that provide the means for humans to undertake their ‘projects’” and so actively influence the nature of our work (ibid).<sup>2</sup>

As Keller and Weisser remind us, “coming to terms with . . . places derives from working to see how they are located relationally, as well as by recognizing our own locations on, in, under, against, between, away from, and/or among these places” (3-4). In practical terms, “evaluating, studying, or defining a place,” they write, “is an activity that must consider the place’s position in relation to others.” (3). So, in what follows, I will argue for two interrelated ways to do just that—approximation and surrounding (along with their shared counterpart, mapping)—as methods by which to locate, evaluate, study and define Writing Studies relative to contemporary Composition and Rhetoric (and other places) and by which to enable and structure action therein. In brief, approximation is way of conceptualizing difference and similitude in place-based terms for enactive purposes and provides a) a conceptual *means* for studying, evaluating, and defining

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often used therein to describe approaches based in philosophical arguments like those of Michel de Certeau that, for example, there is a “distinction between space (*espace*) and place (*lieu*) that delimits a field” (117).

<sup>2</sup> More classically-oriented readers may here be tempted to say that, as an enactive place in and with which to act, as both “areas” *in* which to “undertake our projects” and also as “tools” *with* which to do so, Writing Studies should serve as something very much like a topos. Granted, this introduces another spatial metaphor into the mix, but topos is one that is broadly familiar in Composition and Rhetoric and so provides a comfortable analogy. As Bawarshi writes, “invention takes *place*, which is why classical rhetoricians recommended the topoi or commonplaces as the sites in which rhetors could locate the available means of persuasion for any given situation” (112, emphasis in the original). However, dealing with and acting *with/in* Writing Studies as a place is more than (only) a problem of finding the “available means of persuasion” therein because “persuasion” is only part of the problem of acting in a Writing Studies that is surrounded, so to speak, by other places.

places and b) a *process* for mapping places and their enactments through an “As + In” operation. Likewise, surrounding is a way of assessing and ascribing relational value and order to approximated places, which enables us to identify and respond to influences that might structure our enactments therein and our speculative mappings of future “place-ments.” The approximation of Writing Studies enables us to enact—to act *as though with/in* that place. And the surrounding of Writing Studies enables us to ascribe particular values and orderings *between* it and other places, to identify and respond to pressures to enact in particular ways for particular ends as a result, and to speculate on the potentials and problems of “placing” Writing Studies and its subjects in, for example, the University and in various programs and departments in the academic landscape. And the use of these place-making and place-taking tools, I argue, can not only enable a range of actions, identities, and predictions but can also make a Writing Studies field and orientation more enactable in the future.

## **1. Coming to Terms with Places and/through Approximation, Surrounding, and Mapping**

### *1.1 Acting As-Though-In Place Through Approximation*

The most immediate value Writing Studies has as a place is its capacity to enable “local” action—that is, to enable agents to make the choice to act *as though in* it, and the capacity of Writing Studies to enable such a choice is a significant part of its orientational and rhetorical exigency. As Brooke and McIntosh argue:

rhetorical action comes as much from the choice of *where* to locate one’s arguments . . . as it does from the choice of who to address and what to argue for.

Rhetorical action comes into being as the writer shapes a clear understanding of the *place* of the action. (147, emphasis in the original)

And approximation, albeit tautologically, is both the outcome and primary mechanism by which this occurs.

For example, in the preceding chapter I argued that enacting Writing Studies by defining writing as an occupied and occupying subject is a complex and necessary business of producing Writing Studies as a distinct sub-field in contemporary Composition—an argument intended to be mapped *into* a Writing Studies located *with/in* Composition and Rhetoric as the latter’s subject(ive) occupation continues to evolve in the University.<sup>3</sup> And both the choice to make this argument and the choice to act *as* though *in* Composition and Rhetoric, wherein I will find an actual audience, is enabled by a complex set of approximations that came earlier on.

In fact, the As + In operation of approximation could be seen as the enactive basis of the entire project of arguing for a conception of “Writing Studies” *as* not only a synonym for Composition and Rhetoric but also a “field” *in* which to get (re)oriented. Further, conceiving of Writing Studies (or Composition) as a field, as Reynolds says, is a way of “. . . giving it boundaries of *absolute space*” (28, my emphasis), a phrase she takes from geographers Neil Smith and Cindi Katz and referring to “space as a container or as discrete, identifiable locations, like acres or plots or battlefields or city blocks” (19)—*place*, in other words. This is as much a practical as a conceptual issue, though, as spatial/placial metaphors “can shape theory and research. . . . Once composition could be named a field, a concept reflecting absolute space, then it could wield power” (Reynolds

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<sup>3</sup> Please see “Composition-Writ-Large(r-Thin-Writing)” in Chapter 3.

14), orientational and occupational power, for example, to influence agents acting *as* though *in* that “discrete, identifiable location.” Through approximation rather than synonymy, both “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric” can be identified *as* “fields,” and each can maintain (or produce) distinction while enabling a metaphoric entailment that enables my acting *as* though *in* and *between* them. It is the triangulation of Writing Studies and Composition with “field”—which is, to be precise, more of a merging than an approximation (e.g., “Composition and Rhetoric and Writing Studies are not just *analogous* to fields but *are* fields”)—that enables their production *as* bounded places *in* which my project and I can take/make place.

Likewise, in terms of orientation and identity, where Writing Studies can be seen *as* a field *in* which agents and their occupations take/make place and also a tool with which to do so, it gains the capacity to orient human agents in inquiry and argument *as* those of Writing Studies. By actively considering “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric” as places, and using the As + In operator with “field,” I am enabled to conceive of and then actually *behave* as though “Writing Studies” and “Composition” are the *kinds* of places within which I can get distinctly oriented. And, by further approximating, I am enabled to identify as one or another *kind* of compositionist between them (a Writing Studies agent or not) given that, as Reynolds argues, “identity is constructed in place, via place . . . ” (86). The “field of Writing Studies *with/in* the field of Composition and Rhetoric” is the place *in* which I have attempted to take rhetorical action *as* a particular kind of agent by arguing in, in relation to, and for Writing Studies. It is the site and tool through which I have constructed an authorial identity that allows a

kind of “mapping” *into* as a way of locating myself and my arguments, of getting oriented in action.<sup>4</sup> The approximation of field(s) as a place-making and place-taking device, then, is not merely a conceptual issue. It is a significant part of the how and why of every argument I have presented thus far.

To clarify, this is not necessarily the first individual enactment of Writing Studies—so long as “Writing Studies” is merged, rather than only approximated with/in “Composition.” That is, wherever “Writing Studies” and “Composition and Rhetoric” do not reference distinct places, compositionists have been enacting Writing Studies for many years through other approximations, particularly with/in “English.” We might, for example, think of familiar works like David Bartholomae’s “What is Composition and (if you know what it is) Why Do We Teach It,” which bears out a similar construction and value for place-ment, not of Writing Studies with/in Composition but of Composition with/in English and Bartholomae *between* them. “I have . . . been ‘in’ composition for some time” (327), he writes. However, as he says, “. . . the composition I am talking about is not a consensus or a specific professional (or ‘disciplinary’) agenda” but a place defined by a) occupying and occupied subjects, a “set of problems” and “those professionals willing to work on student writing,” and b) the occupation of those subjects in “the space within English studies where student writing is a central concern” (333). That is, Composition is here (and in the rest of Bartholomae’s essay and in myriad works by other compositionists) a conceptualized *place* endowed with actionable meaning by

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<sup>4</sup> “Writing Studies agent” is not a determinate identification—only an indeterminate one that is dependent on observations of experience and behavior at a given time and place, and on a specialized construction of inquiry and invention. Please see Chapter 5 on “grouping” and on “field-based inquiry” for details.

the place-ment therein of the subject of “student writing” and other “problems” attended to by a constellation of human agents oriented toward them, all of which is posited as a precedential warrant for local action (in this case, as suggested by his title, “teaching”), for acting *as though in* Composition and Rhetoric. Of course, doing so requires “a certain kind of training and *orientation*” (336, my emphasis); though, Bartholomae counters this position to a certain degree by suggesting that he was and had been certainly *in* Composition *as* a compositionist without having ever had any training therein, “at least as that training is now defined in graduate programs.” In his grounding approximation, Composition is “*as* a professional commitment to do a certain kind of work with a certain set of materials with a general commitment to the values and problems *of* English,” that is, *in* English (336, my emphasis).

The difference here is primarily in the choice to consider “Writing Studies” a *different* place than “Composition and Rhetoric” and to deal with the range of potentials and problems that come from doing so “locally,” to rhetorically situate action (like researching or teaching) *as though in* a Writing Studies that is neither synecdoche for the whole of nor the same place as Composition. However, this (or any other) enactment of Writing Studies or/in Composition and Rhetoric, as Bartholomae’s example demonstrates by analogy, occurs in complicating relations with/in an arrangement of other places.

### *1.2 Surrounding Places (On Receptivity and “Locations of Writing”)*

As I have also argued for a conception of Writing Studies as a particular *kind* of place (a sub-field), the potential value of taking rhetorical action with/in Writing Studies

through approximation is partially structured by the influence of its surroundings. “Surroundings,” in this sense, can be understood colloquially (the rooms in which we sit writing and reading, those things of which we should be aware as we move through a place in the city or on a hiking trail). To add a more technical sense to this, when I refer to “surroundings” I also mean acts of mapping or situating approximated agents and their actions *into* places, and even of mapping and situating those places *into* other places in order to structure and define value, stakes, and contexts (a neighborhood situated *with/in* and mapped *into* a city and relative to other neighborhoods as part of a political redistricting effort or a new academic unit situated *with/in* and mapped *into* one or another college in a particular university to define its source of institutional funding and the pedagogical responsibilities of its faculty).

Both approximation and surrounding, as technical terms, may be relatively new to Composition and Rhetoric, the field with which I have both approximated and surrounded Writing Studies. But a concern with locative approaches is certainly familiar to compositionists, and this contextualizes and structures the value and contexts I ascribe to the materials I situate and map into my place-based inquiry for a Writing Studies sub-field in Composition. Further, the familiarity with locative approaches to issues in Composition and Rhetoric will contextualize and structure responses by compositionists to any Writing Studies arguments I make about and through approximations and surroundings. For example, while writing this piece, *College Composition and Communication* published a two-part special issue on “Locations of Writing,” which potentially suggests an increasing receptivity for locative arguments in contemporary



Composition (and is also interesting for the journal's inclusion of the final installment of the poster series discussed in Chapter 2).<sup>5</sup> The project of making locative arguments in, in relation to, or for the place of Writing Studies *with/in* contemporary Composition and Rhetoric, then, is contextualized by a felt expectation (certainly on my part and likely on the part of my audience) that I should address work published in the double-issue. The arguments I am pursuing are not only the result of a set of approximations between Writing Studies and Composition but will also, if successful, come into a set of surroundings *with/in* a field where *CCC* has attained considerable intellectual and sub-cultural value. However, relative to the context of my inquiry, I am more interested in the very existence of the double-issue than in any particular argument made by any

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<sup>5</sup> The final poster is, auspiciously enough, not on “writing” (as I had been anticipating) but on “Writing Studies.” This has some limited significance in that it has been included by a selection of *CCCC* members in a poster series intended to present a number of central subjects (“core terms”) occupying the field and published in one of *Composition*'s most widely read journals. While that does not necessarily suggest any sort of wider agreement among compositionists, the (f)act of including “Writing Studies” as the final entry might certainly be read as a claim that it is already “placed” *with/in* *Composition*. However, the term is again presented as referring to only the most commonly promulgated conception of modern disciplinary *Composition and Rhetoric*—as another name for an “academic discipline” developed via a pedagogical imperative in the 20<sup>th</sup> century “in response to new students attending college, including soldiers returning from World War II . . . women and students of color” and intended to serve university writing instructors and their students as a “disciplinary background for writing courses” (n. pag.). So, while the poster might suggest that the term “Writing Studies” is already placed *with/in* *Composition and Rhetoric*, it would also seem to suggest a sense that a distinct place of and for Writing Studies—at least for those *CCCC* members responsible for the poster—does not exist. As such, the value of this final poster is perhaps limited to its use as another small demonstration of what I have been arguing all along: that the merging of Writing Studies and Composition is a complex and problematic issue, best approached as a project of considering the role and nature of Writing Studies *with/in* contemporary *Composition and Rhetoric* and requiring orientational and enactive address.

individual work published therein, specifically because it provides a handy demonstration of the interactions of place, approximation, and surrounding.

On a broad level, says Yancey in her editor's introduction, what is useful in calling for and presenting "both vignettes and articles addressing concerns ranging from local boundary crossings to international histories" with/in the double-issue is that those agents and their works placed in its pages have "provided a new lens through which we are beginning to explore, research, and understand writing" ("A Mixed Genre" 220). In this sense, the double-issue itself provides a fairly quick and concrete example of placement. Each issue of *CCC* is a) a physically bounded area (*with/in* the pages, for example—though it may also be considered unbounded, to a limited degree, by extending online), b) surrounded, in the colloquial sense, by covers and, more technically, by readers and the field of Composition and Rhetoric, c) endowed with human meaning (both the content occupying its pages and whatever meanings agents attach to the journal and its contents), and d) approximated with/in the larger place of the journal called "College Composition and Communication" *in* which both the journal and each issue may operate *as* "sites" at which to consume and produce work in, in relation to, or for the field(s) *CCC* serves and also *as* "tools" with which to do so.

Each issue, that is, constitutes an approximated place surrounded by and surrounding other places that structure the value, contexts, and stakes ascribed to both any given issue and any given piece published therein. For example, my own sense of the value of the double-issue on "Locations of Writing" is structured by my having located it *with/in* inquiry devoted to treating the place of Writing Studies *with/in* Composition and

Rhetoric. And that interplay of place, approximation, surrounding is what makes me experience a moment of excitement and see relevance when I see Yancey asking, “Where do we write?” in her editor’s introduction, “and what difference, if any, does the location of our writing make? How does our location influence what we write and how we share our writing? And what about our own located-ness?” (“Locations” 5). First, I cannot help but note that these questions, which frame the double-issue, clearly echo several of the place-based concerns raised earlier about locating rhetorical actions. Likewise, the responses to my arguments by readers familiar with the double-issue and the sorts of questions raised therein will likely be structured, to whatever degree, by placing this chapter in relation *to* the double-issue and other publications (and other places, like the classroom) that will influence the ways those readers ascribe value and context (“relevance,” that is) to my actions.<sup>6</sup> However, along with any other readers who surround themselves with many other place-based, locatively-oriented studies in the field, I am also made suspicious of any claims like Yancey’s that locative thinking constitutes a particularly novel approach to the work of compositionists—as Keller and Weisser have observed, “nearly all of the conversations in composition studies involve place, space and location, in one way or another” (1).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Such as, for example, making these arguments at all, and surrounding a discussion of the “Locations of Writing” *CCC* double-issue *with/in* the pages of this text and their contents, which are themselves surrounded by a range of other places and figures—e.g., the dissertation genre, a Ph.D. program, the English department in which my Ph.D. program and this dissertation both take/make place.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the vignettes and articles published in this double-issue are mostly concerned with physical places of and for writing and writing instruction. But as Keller and Weisser argue, offering another commonplace in spatial theory, “all places—

### *1.3 Some (Un)familiar Situations and Professional Place-ments (Or, On Mapping as a Counterpart to Approximation and Surrounding)*

Mapping is the “cartographic” counterpart to approximation and surrounding. It is a bridge that connects them and provides a mechanism by which to identify and move *between* approximated and surrounded places, both in terms of rhetorical action and identity. Independent of approximation and surrounding, Composition is no stranger to the kinds orientational and enactive problems that mapping addresses. Johnathon Mauk, for example, argued more than a decade ago that our students “must learn a vast array of cartographic skills which help them gain a sense of location, a sense of *where*. And without those skills, without a sense of location, students (and their teachers) are quite simply lost” (368-69, emphasis in the original). That is, without that locative capacity and sense of *where*, of place, they and we are disoriented (“lost”).

One of the best (and most familiar) demonstrations of the ways we tend to try to help students develop “this sense of where” is by mapping situations. Though “situation” is not often written about in Composition and Rhetoric as a specifically locative metaphor, it certainly is so—and we are approximating and surrounding in discourse whenever we speak of writing (or writers, readers, texts, etc.) *as* being “situated” *in* history, culture, or social groups. Among the most common of these in modern Composition pedagogy is the approximation and surrounding of writing and writing-related things (like authors, audiences, purposes, contexts, etc.) with/in specifically

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material and metaphorical—are equally *real*” (2, emphasis in the original), and placed-based metaphors (like *topoi*, *kairos*, commonplace, situation, transfer, etc.) have long been used by compositionists for orientational and enactive purposes—to, as Yancey says, “explore, research, and understand writing.”

*rhetorical* situations as a form of what Reynolds calls “rhetorical mapping,” which “addresses questions,” particularly, of movement between places like “How do you get there from here?” (82).<sup>8</sup>

The idea, of course, is that doing so helps students to cartographize, so to speak, the otherwise nebulous situations in which they want/need to write through the construction of what Reynolds calls “mental maps,” “a form of imagined geography,” that enables them to invent a navigable place in which to write through what might otherwise be an amorphous space without boundaries and landmarks. “Mental maps” she writes, “hold the cognitive images in our minds about a place . . . We have mental maps of our hometowns or the most familiar places of our childhoods; we have mental maps of our current neighborhoods or campuses. Based on these mental maps, many of us could give directions to a stranger or could sketch a way from A to B” (ibid). However, in terms of value and purpose, mapping rhetorical situations is a less linear prospect than it might seem. In fact, rhetorical situations as place taking/making tools are best described as “deep maps,” to use William Least Heat Moon’s term (see *PrairyErth: A Deep Map*), with which to make the approximated and surrounded/surrounding places with/in which students write psychologically and rhetorically mappable. “Deep maps,” write Brooke

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<sup>8</sup> For a comparative, process theories of writing tend to function in much the same way. Process is posited as a complex tool *with* which to compose and also as a site *in* which to do so (a place) that surrounds a set of approximated “stages” *with/in* a given writing process. The writer can then “rhetorically map” that writing process by considering how to get *from* one sub-place (“stage”) to another as a means of moving from some processural beginning point to some processural ending point. Although, via postprocess theories, those beginning and ending points, along with each stage *between* them, are best understood not to be structured, valued, and contextualized uniformly across the various writing situations, activity systems, cultures, genres, etc. that surround them.

and McIntosh in arguing for “place-conscious education” in *Composition and Rhetoric* (147), “aren’t road maps like state highway maps, but are drawings of psychological locations (both literal and abstract) created by writers to represent their relationship to place” (131).

Consider, for one example, the common practice of presenting “the rhetorical situation” to students drawn as a visual map in which to get oriented and direct rhetorical action (like writing). And consider that it is not possible to produce worthwhile visual maps of anything without approximating and surrounding. I cannot draw an effective visual map without both constructing visual difference between the image I construct and whatever is outside that image and also similitude between it and whatever place I intend that image to represent. Likewise, doing so requires surrounding a place at the center of the map, for example, *with/in* other places not at the center of the map and also surrounding the map with other places—*with/in* a piece of paper, a screen, a chalkboard, an audience’s mind, etc.

As such, though the details of these maps may differ widely, for the purpose of demonstrating “deep mapping” functions, literally any visual map of the rhetorical situation will do. See, for example, the one presented in the *CCC* poster page:

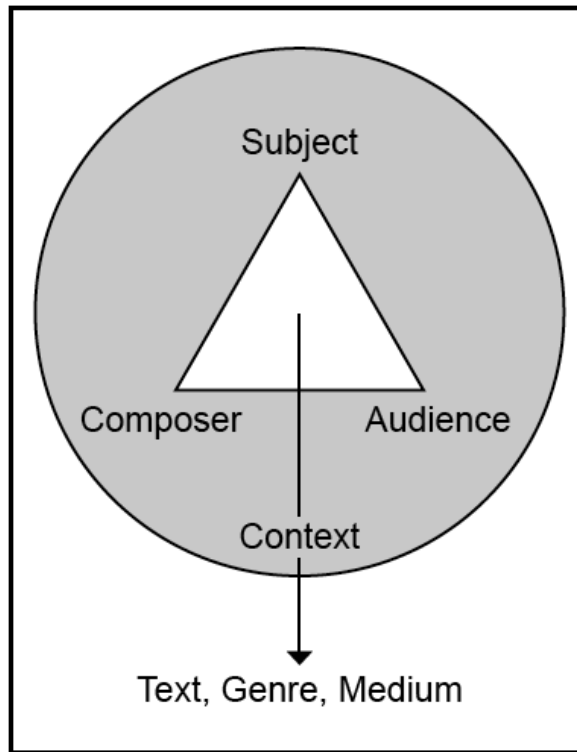


Fig. 1. “Rhetorical Situation.” *College Composition and Communication* 61.3 (2010).

In this map, each part of the rhetorical situation is surrounded by a bounded area, which is made meaningful by placing each component in relation to the others with/in that boundary. It is a place in which the writer may get oriented by mentally and rhetorically approximating him/herself as and/or in relation to his/her intended audience and subject, and surrounding all three with and/or in some context. And that writer can then act *as* though *in* that mapping of the situation by moving *from* this triangulated placement *into* a confluence of other places (“text,” “genre,” and “medium”).

The rhetorical situation, then, represents a relatively simple and familiar demonstration of what bridging approximations and surroundings through mapping—

rhetorically, “deeply,” visually, and/or mentally— can do in helping to construct a cartographic rhetoric of navigability and visibility. Mapping, whether mentally or visually, helps students to, as Mauk says, develop “a sense of location, a sense of *where*” they are when they write. And helping students rhetorically situate themselves and their actions through mapping gives them a site and a tool (place) that they and we can use to negotiate both what they so often experience as the uncharted territory (space) of writing and an arrangement of very chartable territories (places) through which they must travel to get where we might hope to lead them as rhetorically-educated, place-conscious writers.

## **2. With/In the Place of Composition With/In the University (Or, On Pedagogical and Academic Place-ments)**

### *2.1 On Pedagogical (E)merging and Surrounding*

The University (along with its approximated places, such as the Classroom) should be seen as one of the most important and influential surroundings to contend with in considering the place-ment of Writing Studies with/in Composition and Rhetoric. Of course, the political and practical conditions of teaching and engaging in textual production will vary for agents in different material surroundings at the University of Colorado, at Harvard, at Los Angeles City College. And, as Reynolds argues, the materiality of “place does matter; surroundings do have an effect on learning or attitudes toward learning, and material spaces have a political edge. In short, *where* writing instruction takes place has everything to do with *how*” (20, emphasis in the original), but



this is somewhat beside the point. The larger conceptual place, “The University” *with/in* which individual universities are approximated and surrounded cannot help but bear on the place-ment of Composition—and of a Writing Studies placed with/in it—though the details will always differ from place to place therein.

In fact, it is difficult to address the power of place in Composition without considering the University, without thinking of, for example, Bartholomae’s now seminal claim that “every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university” and to act *as* though *in* that place—a place which itself must be mapped as a range of approximated places, “like History or Anthropology or Economics or English” (4). And, practically speaking, “we don’t have to go far—indeed, we don’t have to go anywhere at all” writes Julie Drew, “to think about the ways in which *place* plays a role in producing texts, and how such relationships affect the discursive work that writers attempt from within the university” (57, emphasis in the original). Of course, both Drew and Bartholomae are talking primarily about students in this regard. But, as my concern is primarily with scholars more than students, the more pressing questions are how Writing Studies agents acting with/in Composition and Rhetoric may be influenced by University place-ment, and how that place-ment bears on the conception and definition of either field.

For example, defining Composition and Rhetoric *as* the place *of* writing in the University has remained a complicated problem, in part, because Composition has so often been merged, rather than only approximated, with “academic” and “pedagogical” places. The outcome is that Composition has often been enacted as *only* the

“pedagogical” study of “academic” writing such that the *between*-ness of places like “The Classroom” and “Composition and Rhetoric” is often lost. Where their distinction is lost, the place of Composition can be reasonably be defined by whatever populates the place of the Classroom or of more specialized places like FYC, whether physically or conceptually—either undergraduate students engaged in compositional enactment (like writing) or the teaching of such students engaged in such practices. Even where these places are only approximated rather than merged, though, Composition is often problematically surrounded *with/in* pedagogical/academic places, the FYC Course in particular. If, however, as we have seen more recently, academic and pedagogical places are approximated and surrounded *with/in* the place of Composition and Rhetoric (posited as simply a much larger field of concerns than FYC, student-writers, and academic writing), Composition is much harder to define as a de facto pedagogical endeavor and much easier to map as a field *with/in* which pedagogical concerns like FYC, the Classroom, students, and academic writing may be surrounded amidst a constellation of other non-pedagogically approximated subjects, occupations, and places.

We may, of course, also argue that the disciplinary and institutional history of Composition accounts for the academicality/pedagogicality of its scholarship—e.g., Composition, *through* FYC and its institutional predecessors, has become an academically-oriented, writing-centric field valued and occasioned (not entirely, but considerably) by the instantiation of a university course. But the fact remains that the historical place-to-place relationality of Composition and FYC specializes the variable nature of Composition’s subject(ivity) and place-ment in ways that have proven

institutionally and teleologically problematic to compositionists—and helpful to anyone who might wish to reduce Composition to a “merely pedagogical” endeavor. As a result, the pedagogicality of Composition and Rhetoric is often seen as more an issue of political advantage and disadvantage, or of a theory/praxis divide, than anything else.

This debate is universally familiar to compositionists, but Amy Williams, in a recent *Composition Forum* article, provides a particularly useful gloss:

As early as 1998, Sharon Crowley argued for composition as a discipline in its own right, distinct from the pedagogical interests and demands of first-year composition courses. Likewise, separating theory and pedagogy animates Sidney I. Dobrin’s imperative to composition scholars: “Stop talking about teaching.” Amy E. Robillard agrees with Dobrin and Crowley that theory is too bound to practices, but she optimistically asserts that the much-needed sea change is already underway. (n. pag.)

And so, as she observes, “some contemporary composition scholarship appears less interested in establishing a disciplinary pecking order and more interested in liberating composition theory from pedagogy altogether” (n. pag.).

However, where the move to bring Composition scholarship *out* of its pedagogical place-ment is not taken up, we can reasonably predict that any agent with an operative orientation to writing (in whatever form) *with/in* a still-pedagogically-defined field of Composition and Rhetoric will continue to be influenced by an implied (if not explicit) pedagogical telos, a “pedagogical imperative” in Lynn Worsham’s terms, for “producing scholarship that” bears, as Karen Kopelson says, “directly on teaching” (752). That is, as new approximations, surroundings, and mappings occur, the historical influence of Composition and Rhetoric’s pedagogical place-ments do not disappear, even

if only because pedagogical values remain attached to the field as a surrounding with/in which agents act—and to significant effect.

For example, in a study of graduate writers pursuing doctoral work in Composition at her university, although I would speculate that her findings likely apply much more broadly, Kopelson reports that:

When asked if they encouraged dissertating graduate students to do work that makes direct connections to pedagogy, the vast majority of our faculty respondents (over 80 percent) claimed to do so only when “appropriate”—that is, when a student’s “project calls for it by its very nature,” or when there are “clear pedagogical implications” to the work. Interestingly, however, the majority of students in our sample revealed feelings of intense pressure to *create* clear pedagogical implications and applications whether their projects led them in that direction or not, and, most tellingly I think, whether they experienced such pressure firsthand and directly or only as some vague sense of what is required by the field.” (753-54, emphasis in the original)

As Mauk writes, various aspects of a “surrounding region,” such as its history, “all figure into the *idea* of a particular place—hence into its value” (368, emphasis in the original). And, as the idea of Composition and Rhetoric in academic places ranging from the FYC course to doctoral programs continues to figure into their value, the pressure to move toward pedagogy in research and argument persists, even for newer agents entering the field.

I do not advocate for or against the pedagogical imperative in Composition or a Writing Studies placed therein—simply for a relationalist, place-based account of a *predictive* function that is too often *reduced* to disciplinary, institutional, and political motives. As a scholar, I have a significant stake in either deliberately placing my projects pedagogically (or not). And the degree to which I do so has implications for the potential receptivity in the field for the arguments I make (we need look no farther than book

reviews published in the field to find the commonplace lament that one or another recent publication is theoretically interesting but light on classroom application), if not for my job prospects. If I want to make and take a place for myself in a pedagogically-defined program or journal, it is to my advantage to structure my disciplinary, institutional, and political aims relative to the places I want to go. For another example, a writing program administrator has a significant institutional stake in defining his or her program not just *in* but *as* a pedagogical place—even if for no other reason (and there are many) than that doing so provides a place for instructors in his or her program to work and an historically grounded claim to value for the program and its faculty on campus. However, such motives cannot help but be structured by the degree to which the University (as well as the *particular* R1, R2, or R3 university at which an agent works) is itself defined, approximated with, and mapped as *more* a place of teaching or research—or, for that matter, the institutional place-ment of writing with/in other disciplinary, curricular, and institutional surroundings.

## *2.2 In-Between Places (Or, Between “Academic” and “Creative” Writing in University Disciplines and Curricula)*

Consider the problem of “academic ” and/vs. “creative” writing. How does one surround the other in the pedagogically-defined places of the University—and to what effect? Compositionists have a stake in defining Composition and Rhetoric as a place that is larger than the academic, and this is complicated not only by defining writing via an

academic vs. creative binary but also by relations between Composition and Creative Writing as approximated places mapped *into* the University.

To begin with, consider the construction of “academic writing” relative to the old-standby locative claim that Composition must attend to writing beyond the Classroom. There is nothing inherently academic in occupying or being occupied with the subject of writing. Writing is approximated *as* an academic subject by its being mapped *into* surrounding academic places (like classrooms and the Classroom, academic curricula and the Curriculum, universities and the University, journals devoted to classroom practice, etc.).<sup>9</sup>

Though more recent versions of “Composition must attend to writing beyond the Classroom” tend to be made relative to the explosion of writing in places beyond the Academy, the traditional reading would simply be that Composition should attend to *other-than-only* academic writing. Enter, in locative response, Mauk’s redefinition of “academic writing” (whether as *a* or *the* subject of Composition) such that students might conceive of “the space outside of campus, outside of the classroom, as academic” (380). As he suggests, “in composition courses,” by which he means FYC in particular, “perhaps more than any other *place* in the institution, students and academia interface (collide?) for the first time; hence academic spaces and nonacademic spaces drift together” (369, emphasis in the original). And this “drifting together” has implications for

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<sup>9</sup> This construction may again seem to be a simple invocation of the Wittgensteinian position that the meaning of a *word* is its use in the *language*. The meaning of a *subject* exceeds this—the meaning of a subject is its use in the languages of the fields occupied by that subject *as well as* its enactment in and by the *practices* of occupied agents, which are always-already structured by relation to particular spaces in which language and practice take/make place. Please see Chapter 3 for details.

the place-ment of Composition and Rhetoric by reversing its “surrounding,” though this claim requires a bit of unpacking.

Mauk’s construction is directly enabled by a complex approximation and surrounding in which locations *outside* “campus” and “the classroom” are mapped *into* the “academic,” thereby constructing a larger region of now-*as*-academic places. This is not simple wordplay—reordering the surroundings of writing and writers results in a changed “metaphysics of *where*” (ibid), changed maps that alter our relationships to and enactments of the places in which we write “academically.” Where “academic writing” is a defining occupation and approximation of Composition and Rhetoric, and where the location of “academic writing” is untethered from “campus” and “the classroom”: a) all is potentially a space in which “academic writing” may be invented as taking/making place, and b) Composition and Rhetoric, as a place potentially bounded and made meaningful by surrounding “academic writing,” can then conceptually locate virtually any nonacademic place *with/in* it and so subsume other types of writing and their place-ments. All is potentially mappable and approximate *with/in* the places of Composition and Rhetoric, which has significant implications for what, how, and whom we teach and study.

Is Creative Writing, for example, eventually to be surrounded by Composition in this way? Potentially, yes (as I will discuss shortly), but that has not occurred yet. For example, as Hesse observes:

In its sixty-year history, *CCC* has published about 284 articles, reviews, and reports with “creative writing” appearing in the body of the text, with another 66 or so mentioning “imaginative writing.” (Even a term like *creative nonfiction* appears as a keyword in only 8 articles.) Nearly all of these have been passing

references, often in conjunction with the ever-venerable debate about literature's place in the composition course or broader considerations of the nature of the English major or department. ("The Place" 35, emphasis in the original)

Likewise, the place-ment of Creative Writing with/in English departments is common—place-ment with/in independent Composition programs, much less so. But even beyond institutional placement in one department or another, the surroundings of Creative Writing have been pedagogically problematized differently in academic places than have Composition and Rhetoric's.

Kelly Ritter, for example, recounts a narrative to this effect. As she says, "creative writers exist as a group both inside and outside the academy"—that is, in both academic and nonacademic places—which is generally not the case for "academic writers." As a doctoral student in English with a specialty in Creative Writing, she reports having "heard little about what it might mean to enter a university *teaching* position, or what teaching creative writing as a professional writer/teacher might involve" (205, emphasis in the original). However, the place-ment of Creative Writing with/in the academic places of English (curricula and doctoral programs, for example) has motivated and animated a reordering of surroundings and a re-mapping that has resulted in a broadly emergent pedagogical turn.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, D.G. Myers, *The Elephants Teach*, Timothy Mayers' *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English*, Graeme Harper's "The Creative Writing Doctorate: Creative Trial or Academic Error?," Anna Leahy et al's "Theories of Creativity and Creative Writing Pedagogy," and even older works by compositionists-who-are-also-creative-writers that are becoming canonic texts in Creative Writing Studies as its pedagogical focus has increased, like Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom's *Colors of a Different Horse*, Joseph Moxley's *Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy*, among others, though, these last were often "seen at the fringe of both fields" (Hesse, "The Place" 37) prior to Creative Writing's pedagogical turn.



That is, as Creative Writing has moved increasingly toward place-ment as a growing and distinct academic discipline (an academic place endowed with epistemologies, practices of researching, teaching, and arguing about those epistemologies, and institutionally supported apprenticeships) *with/in* English, the academicality and pedagogicality of its place in the University structure, in its scholarship, and in the motives of its agents has grown tremendously. As Nigel McLoughlin writes, this is occurring not only in response to demand as “more Creative Writing students intend to teach the subject when they graduate” and are demanding coursework “dedicated to the pedagogy of their subject” but also because “Creative Writing is a growth area,” which “may also be the reason why the literature on the pedagogy of writing is currently growing exponentially; after all we need materials in the form of theories and case studies to teach the courses!” (90)

So, as Hesse asks, “why ponder what ‘creative’ writing might offer composition studies, which seems to be doing pretty well, thank you . . . ” (“The Place” 34)? He offers two reasons (“disciplinarity or, more crassly, academic turf” and “the identity of composition studies”) to which I would add a third: Writing Studies. The place-ment of the disciplines and identities of both Creative Writing and Composition—and of English, which still often surrounds both fields departmentally—would be complicated by the place-ment of Writing Studies in ways that may have significant implications for all four fields by presenting (not unproblematic) opportunities to redraw the map in which these places are approximated *with/in* and surround each other. Imagine, then, an academic landscape in which Writing Studies, Composition, Creative Writing, and English are all

*disciplinarily* approximated. What would the map and the surroundings look like—and to what effect?

### **3. Speculating on Writing Studies and Composition with/in Disciplinary and Institutional Places**

#### *3.1 Mapping Writing Up and Down (Or, On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Disciplinary and Institutional Surroundings)*

It is a relatively generic feature of (re)orientational projects in Composition like those discussed in Chapter 2 to end by charting a disciplinary, curricular, or institutional futurity based on the arguments presented (e.g., North's *Refiguring the Ph.D. in English Studies*, Smit's *The End of Composition Studies*, or Scholes' *The Rise and Fall of English*). And the emergence of a Writing Studies discipline is a potential of a Writing Studies place with/in which to act, whether in teaching or scholarship. As a place, Writing Studies provides both a site and a tool for the undertaking of Writing Studies projects and a bounded area endowed with human meaning at which to confront questions of some of its definitional and value-producing surroundings, such as Composition and Rhetoric with/in the University and academic and creative place-ments of writing in the present moment. But what about the place of Writing Studies in the future?

Should an actual discipline (e)merge *with/in* Writing Studies somehow distinct from the discipline of Composition, the question of precisely what it is we study in Writing Studies, of where we might be housed, and of exactly who “we” are will be

manifest in our efforts to codify the disciplinary epistemology, identity, and curriculum of the field in the University. Likely, we will begin by emerging as a discipline most immediately from Composition, much as we have seen already *in* Composition and Rhetoric as own its discipline has emerged as distinct from English, or rather, from English-*as*-Literature. However, this prospect is somewhat complicated by the emergence of a Creative Writing discipline. As such, the rise of a disciplinary Writing Studies would likely not be wholly—if at all—untethered from the continued rise of disciplinary Composition and Creative Writing as places for the study and teaching of writing, particularly relative to the disorientation of English *with/in* which both Composition and Creative Writing are often institutionally surrounded.

Over the past two decades, for example, outside of Composition and Creative Writing, writing's being on the rise has been very much contextualized by the correlated sense that the rest of the English department's ship has been sinking—at least as seen from the Literary helm—*with/in* the falling tide of the Humanities in general. This has only intensified English's disorientation and has been increasingly manifest in a discourse of “apocalypse” that is unlikely to be assuaged by the instantiation of a new academic discipline with a titular claim distinct from both Composition and Rhetoric and Creative Writing.<sup>11</sup> As Bousquet explains it in “The Figure of Writing and the Future of English,” apropos even in name:

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<sup>11</sup> As Jessica Yood writes, “literary and composition and rhetoric scholars are all, in some way, chroniclers of change,” but “the rhetoric of ‘crisis’ about the ‘fate of the field’,” meaning English, “is not some elusive idea” and, even at the time of her writing near the turn of the century, “it [was] becoming the material of a new genre of writing” (526) in which English's apocalypse is always just around the corner. More recently, a

though literature may be receiving less support, old standbys like rhetoric and writing have unprecedented traction along fascinating new paths of inquiry and practice, and many research scholars under the sign of “literature” have rapidly and willingly shifted their research objects to nonliterary texts (often in close relationship with cultural studies, women’s studies, and ethnic studies). Reasonable observers from other disciplines or professions can fairly shrug and ask, “What’s the big deal?” With stunning new justifications for its activities that far outnumber the reasons to shrink, English should be experiencing a renaissance (at least relative to other disciplines), not a collapse. (119)

Note that English is somehow *(re)becoming* a form of either Writing Studies or Composition in this portrayal. As a representative staging of the problem, we are clearly led to understand the rise of “writing and rhetoric” (which were heretofore just “old standby” subjects in English) to be entailed with the “shift” of literary subject(ivity), a re-orientational characterization if ever there was one: the enacted abandonment of a more traditionally constituted literary subject by literary scholars moving toward the *nonliterary*.

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corresponding discourse of apocalypse has emerged specifically with/in Composition and Rhetoric, but with a decidedly different and more global framing. Paul Lynch has recently termed this Composition’s “apocalyptic turn, in which the end of the world looms ever larger in our disciplinary and pedagogical imagination,” in response to which, he argues, we “seem to be thinking more and more about what composition ought to do in the face of serious dangers to human flourishing. A growing list of authors—including Derek Owens, Kurt Spellmeyer, Lynn Worsham, and others—share a basic perspective: economic disruption, endless violence, and, perhaps most important, environmental collapse should force us to reexamine what it means to work in the field of composition, and this reexamination should go to the very heart of what composition means. The apocalyptic turn raises fundamental questions about the focus and scope of our work: what, finally, can composition do to ameliorate these threats?” (458) It is worth noting that this version of apocalyptic thinking has long been present in both Creative Writing and Literature—hence, “dystopian” literature, genres, and courses. However, the “apocalyptic turn” in Composition is one further—and interesting—example of the ways that choosing to place Composition both *with/in* and *beyond* academic places can provide an impetus to reshape the nature of work taken in, in relation to, or for it. As Lynch writes, “something major is happening in the world outside the academy, and the work of teaching writing ought to take that something into account” (459).

However, Bousquet's staging unwittingly, we should hope, rehearses and participates in the *displace*-ment of Literature by neglecting the many scholars and critics who *do* remain primarily concerned with approximately "literary" texts. This would suggest that such *literary* members of English are now extraneous to its renaissance and thereby perpetuates a decades-old problem of disciplinary "(ir)relevance" in English Studies (to lightly trope Robert Yagelski's term). Further, the maneuver misleading downplays the richness and consequence of literary scholarship's past and present contributions to the study of writing. As such, while I agree with Bousquet's general assessment of the landscape, we should understand this exclusionary tactic to be both consequential and untenable, just as similar tactics employed on *behalf* of literary study in English have been employed to the exclusion of others (particularly, of Composition and Rhetoric) in the past.<sup>12</sup> I think, though, that we will see these kinds of exclusions persist where a Writing Studies discipline, curriculum, and institution emerges in the academy because a version of this pattern is already at work.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This is, of course, embroiled in ongoing arguments about the identity and value of Composition enacted *with/in* English. For example, as Joseph Harris writes, "*composition* is a term in an in-house debate in English departments—one side of a seemingly interminable squabble between teachers of writing and professors of literature (Harris xi, emphasis in the original), and suggests that writing "only becomes *composition* when embroiled in a set of arguments over what sort of intellectual work matters in English departments—lit vs. comp, rhet vs. comp, theory vs. comp, and so on" (xii, emphasis in the original).

<sup>13</sup> An historical example with/in Composition and Rhetoric that may spring to mind is Gary Olson's discussion of the "hegemonic struggle" over identity in Composition, in which "one group of like-minded individuals attempts to further *its* vision of the field, while other groups do the same." In his example: ". . . throughout the 1970s, the people we have come to call 'cognitivists' and those we have come to call 'expressivists' battled between themselves over how the field should be defined, and in doing so, they both

In Chapters 1 and 2, I argued that a totalizing confluence of Writing Studies and Composition a) *advantages* the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric in the political, institutional, and curricular economy and disorientational milieu in which it now resides and b) *disadvantages* those of us oriented to Writing Studies as something non-identical to Composition, which is, in fact, more a place-based argument (“vantage”) than it may have seemed. So, where English-as-Literature historically dis-ad-vantaged potential compositionists by portraying Composition as *not* a distinct place and having no real subject by a function of its being merged, rather than approximated, *with/in* pedagogy and/or FYC, we were stripped (dis) of a potentially productive position (vantage) from which we might look at or toward (ad) writing—and anything else, e.g., Literature, English, Composition and Rhetoric, etc. We had to *press* in our disciplinary, curricular, and institutional endeavors to “advantage” ourselves, to assert our subject(ive) rights and identity, along with our place-ment beyond the FYC classroom. Likewise, where Writing Studies is disadvantaged, in this sense, by Composition’s merging rather than approximating Writing Studies *with/in* itself, Writing Studies agents are confronted with an analogous situation.

The practice of presenting Writing Studies interchangeably with Composition and Rhetoric now—and more problematically in a future Writing Studies discipline—would

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maintained the tight control over the means of dissemination of scholarship: the few journals available to publish work in composition. Those of us who were interested in philosophical, critical, theoretical scholarship (and in broadening the disciplinary borders of composition to include such interests) were effectively excluded from the conversations. . . . Consequently, the only compositionists who had a reasonable chance to get published, to be heard, were those doing cognitivist or expressivist work; the rest of us were muted (“The Death” 29, emphasis in the original).

permute the antecedent, consequential, and generally exclusionary practice seen in much of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century of presenting “‘literature’ as synecdoche for the many concerns of English” (Bousquet 117). It would entail the rise of Writing Studies in the Academy with the considerably increased contemporary advantage of Composition *in* and *beyond* the increasingly disadvantaged landscape of English-as-Literature. And this entailment would be further complicated by English’s ongoing discourse of crisis and fracture in the subject (Berubé; North et al; Downing; Scholes; Ostergaard, Ludwig, and Nugent; Yood) and of (ir)relevance a) *between* various English disciplines (literary and otherwise), b) *between* English and the larger contemporary culture (Susan Miller, Yagelski and Leonard, Yagelski, Staunton, North et al), and c) *between* the fields and disciplines of English, Composition, and Writing Studies more broadly. I do not mean to predict a *malicious* exclusion but only to suggest that the disciplinary exclusions we have seen in the past and that continue in the present moment will continue to influence interdisciplinary relations between Composition and English in the near future—and would likewise influence relations between these and any disciplinary placement of Writing Studies into the mix.

For example, if a Writing Studies discipline should turn out to be institutionally approximated and surrounded with/in English, a *more* oriented and advantaged English Studies seems very possible. If it is true, as Richard Miller claims, that the present moment in English is “anything but an apocalyptic moment,” and that, rather, “it is a time that invites invention, creativity, improvisation, and experimentation” (149), a disciplinary Writing Studies seems like a potential response to just such an invitation.

Returning to Bousquet, “with stunning new justifications for its activities that far outnumber the reasons to shrink,” we should be able to comfortably say that “English should be experiencing a renaissance (at least relative to other disciplines), not a collapse.” And a disciplinary Writing Studies could conceivably come to *embody* that renaissance by providing further scholarly and political capital to an English Studies not *re-enacted as* Writing Studies but simply placed *with/in* it. If a Writing Studies discipline were to emerge as the institutional site of the study of writing, distinct from Composition not by the presence or absence of pedagogy as a core topos but by a differentiation in place-ment between “writing” and “composition-writ-large(r),” other extant English disciplines may actually find a comfortable place therein.

### *3.2 On Problems of Ownership and (Re)Location*

Should a disciplinary place-ment of Writing Studies emerge, the ownership and location of writing as a disciplinary and curricular subject would represent a significant (dis)orientational problem and opportunity. “To ask who owns writing,” writes Hesse in his 2005 CCCC’s address, “is to ask most obviously about property rights, the buying, selling, leasing of textual acreages” (“Who Owns” 337). In the curricular and institutional situation of modern Composition as earlier discussed, this is much more likely to take the form of a question, as Hesse’s does, about “the conditions under which writing is taught,” about, that is, “who owns the content and pedagogy of composition” (ibid). Who then “owns” the acreage of writing—or of Writing Studies—were a distinct discipline of



Writing Studies to emerge? The implications for the likely candidates who may surround or even be institutionally surrounded by such a disciplinary place would be significant.

Literature and Creative Writing provide a demonstrative case. Obviously the potential for the kinds of exclusions discussed earlier would remain high as the question of ownership is engaged—but this may be addressed, to a certain degree, by the uptake of orientationalist thinking as a counter. From an enactive orientationalist vantage, and taking up the potential of both Literature and Creative Writing to eventually be placed *with/in* Writing Studies, I might approximate Literature and Creative Writing *as* sub-fields that may be mapped *into* the study of writing. In both cases, the subject of the field is generally some approximation of “literary” or “creative” writing without totalizing either discipline.<sup>14</sup> What differentiates them on a field-level is primarily a difference in orientation to and occupation by a common subject—e.g., Literature and its agents are generally oriented *critically* (i.e., to the criticism, analysis, reading and understanding of approximately “literary” writing), whereas Creative Writing and its agents primarily, though not exclusively, manifest a *generative* orientation (i.e., to the production and circulation of approximately “literary” writing).<sup>15</sup> And the manifestation of this

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<sup>14</sup> The potential exception being what Composition tends to call “multimodal” writing and what Creative Writing, for example, tends to call “new media” writing/literature—in which case, we may see an emergent home for studies, students, and scholars *in* the field of disciplines of a fully realized Composition-Writ-Large(r), not because such work is necessarily “nonliterary” but because the more (de)limited writing subject of Writing Studies would be less able to claim ownership or provide as significant an advantage than would Composition.

<sup>15</sup> In more political terms, Scholes suggests the problem is a “restricted notion of literature” as that “you can read it but you can’t write it. And that restriction has led to the separation of the study of reading/literature in our English departments from the study of

orientational and occupational difference accounts for their respective enactments of distinct-but-often-overlapping disciplinary, institutional, and curricular positions with/in different places of same general field (that is, why we might find a poem by Wallace Stevens or Yona Wallach on the syllabus for a course in 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde poetry and also on the syllabus for a poetry workshop—each claiming ownership of these writings without one ever *needing* to claim them as their *exclusive* property).

Likewise, if an enacted academic Writing Studies discipline were to emerge not *as* but *with/in* English, a likely outcome would seem then to be Writing Studies instantiated either *in* Creative Writing or as *incorporating* Creative Writing into the potentially larger and more general enterprise of a disciplinary Writing Studies that might simply formalize a general shift in the population of English already under way. While enrollment in undergraduate and graduate Literature programs have declined (like in many programs in the Humanities), enrollment in Creative Writing programs has skyrocketed. As Dianne Donnelly and Graeme Harper write:

We know that creative writing course/program enrollment in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia continues to climb. The Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) 2011 *Guide to Writing Programs*, for example, points to a significant rise in US creative writing programs, and this increase is in spite of university funding cuts and an overall decline in Humanities' majors. The 79 undergraduate and graduate creative writing programs recorded in 1975 pale in comparison to the present figure of 813. Of this number, more than 346 are at the

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writing/composition” and the further split between “those kinds of writing that can be designated as ‘creative’ and those that cannot. The creative sorts of writing aspire to the condition of literature but cannot claim it” (“After the Fall” 33). To deal with these divisions, he says, “we need to redefine English as the study of textuality rather than literature” (“After the Fall” 34). Though I do not necessarily disagree that moving English toward textuality as a defining subject(ive) occupation may prove orientationally advantageous, I do not believe this will solve the political problems he raises.

graduate level (37 award the PhD), and tens of thousands of students enter and graduate from programs each year. (xiii)

And what this has done, in effect, is provide additional students (and justifications) for literature scholars in the English department to work with, without necessarily requiring that literary scholars abandon their traditional subject.<sup>16</sup>

A slightly different potential is for Writing Studies to institutionally emerge as a *sub-discipline* of Composition more or rather than *in/as* English. However, where an enacted academic Writing Studies discipline emerges more in Composition and Rhetoric than in English, I see the same general pattern of potential exclusions as likely to re-emerge between Writing Studies and Composition as each grapples with ownership such that “writing” itself may be posited, eventually, as just an “old standby” of Comp-Rhet. Consider our colleagues who in department meetings might like to say “I study Writing” and mean *not* the more capacious construction in Composition of “writing” as a metaphor for many different forms of composing. Are they to be left out of an analogous renaissance in Composition as it moves increasingly toward instantiation as a place for the study of a composition-writ-large(r)—and its attendant approximations with New Media and Digital Studies rather than with Literature-directed English departments? The enactment of a disciplinary Writing Studies would potentially offer a way to say “no.” The advent of an enacted Writing Studies discipline provides those scholars a reified

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<sup>16</sup> For one example, the doctoral program in Creative Writing in the English department at the University of Denver is primarily populated by Creative Writing students and actually requires more courses in Literature than in Creative Writing. Of course, this is only one contemporary example, and aggregated data in published scholarship comparing contemporary requirements in English department-based Creative Writing programs are still in short supply.

place—and an advantage—in which to work and to stake new institutional, disciplinary, and curricular claims (that are likely to be, paradoxically, old ones), even as it provides Composition a useful touchstone for difference.

If Writing Studies were to emerge as a sub-discipline of Composition, I see the capacity of Writing Studies to be primarily attendant to a less capaciously defined “writing” likely to partially ground and warrant the move to composition-writ-large(r) as Composition’s core topos (as discussed in Chapters 3). And should this come to pass, we may see Composition and Rhetoric emerge as an arch-discipline in the University such that both Writing Studies—surrounding Literature and Creative Writing as sub-disciplines or not—and some range of other disciplines devoted to the study of “compositions” (most probably, New Media Studies and certain areas of Communications, given the current trajectory of relations between these and Composition) all come to be placed *with/in* Composition’s disciplinary, institutional, and curricular surroundings. This position would likely have significant implications for the institutional place of Composition in the University, as its value and context remains anachronistically defined by the University’s need to educate students in a more (de)limited “writing” (though, this too is slowly changing). However, I do not see a disciplinary Writing Studies as a cause of any significant difficulty in this context. So many of us are already in the process of transforming ourselves (and our programs and curricula) *into* that larger “composition” through our scholarship, teaching, and curricular reforms that it seems likely a national confrontation/conversation about Composition and Rhetoric’s now-much-larger disciplinary purview in the institution is coming anyway.

Of course, the potential of Writing Studies to emerge as a distinct discipline to be mapped in, relative to, or for other places *at all* is largely dependent on the kinds of “local” actions with which I began. The potential of an enacted Writing Studies to have any significant disciplinary, curricular, and institutional effects is a distant prospect that is dependent on a relatively broad uptake of arguments *like* those I have presented in this project and the further enactment of the field in the future to the degree that its institutional place-ment as a discipline *can* present a challenge. That is, the question of Writing Studies’ future is one of *re-enactability*, of *other* agents acting *as though in* the field.

*Part Three: From Enactment to Re-Enactability*

## CHAPTER 5

*Conclusion: Implications and Limitations of  
A Field-Based Orientation and Enactive Methodology/Text*

We have now moved things one step further along. Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the *attention* to one field rather than to another. Also *many of the “observations” are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made.*

—Kenneth Burke, from “Terministic Screens,” 1966

The two central claims of this project are that Writing Studies may be productively considered a potential field with/in and emergent from contemporary Composition and Rhetoric in which to get oriented and enact—and that this text not only calls for but demonstrates methods for doing so. I have argued that “Writing Studies” is a relatively recent term in Composition that should be considered specifically for its capacity to disorient and orient individual agents (Chapter 1); that the potential field to which that term can refer, and its negative disorientation, are entailed with the positive (dis)orientational complex of Composition and Rhetoric, through which Writing Studies’ capacity to (re)orient compositionists in our worldviews, experiences, and practices is structured—not independent of but entailed with a range of disciplinary, curricular, and institutional factors (Chapter 2); that enacting this (re)orientational potential with and in contemporary Composition is first accomplished by compositionists enacting the field of Writing Studies as a space substantially occupied by writing subjects with and in a Composition-Writ-Large(r) than either writing or Writing Studies (Chapter 3), and then further enacted with and in Writing Studies, itself, through rhetorical acts like inquiry, argument, and speculation structured by approximation, surrounding, and mapping—all done *as though in* that place (Chapter 4).

And, in the process, I have suggested that making/taking up a position in practice as though with/in Writing Studies to investigate its (dis)orientational complex, subjects, and locations with/in Composition and Rhetoric *is* an enactment. That is, that I have practiced what I have preached here. That this text, from start to finish, is one manifest instance of an agent attempting to *do* Writing Studies with and in contemporary



Composition, acting as in relation to, for, and in that field—and oriented by it. If successful, the most significant implication of the project, then, would be that it may work to ground and warrant the claim that Writing Studies is an *actual* field with/in which Writing Studies-oriented work is now being done and may be done further in the future by other agents.

Put another way, the project is intended to serve as a *rhetorical* enactment, which incorporates the enactive forms discussed in Chapter 3 (entelechiating by the making substantial of some potential) and in Chapter 4 (acting *as though in*, in this case, Writing Studies) but adds an additional set of methodological and textual challenges. Rhetorical enactment is best described as a persuasive method or product in which a text/author attempts to be seen as directly embodying the arguments presented. Rhetorical enactments intend that the reader a) perceives of a text and/or a rhetor as “an embodiment and performance of that which the speaker recommends to his/her audience” (Houck 43), and b) by extension, perceives of its author as one who “represents the views that s/he is advancing” (ibid), c) as a “means of constructing rhetorical proof” by direct representation of the rhetor and his or her work as argumentative evidence (Ray 389).

What complicates this aim is the fact that the arguments I have presented in the project are largely methodological in nature, less in the sense of “writing process” (though, this is true to a certain degree) and more in the sense of arguing for a set of field-oriented processes to be used for getting oriented and enacting with and in a Writing Studies field with/in contemporary Composition. As such, a reasonable depiction of the project as a whole might be as a kind of “process piece” (i.e., it is a reflexive, iterative

text on the methods by which the product is produced). I would further construe the “process” aspect of the project as employing a troped form of what Kyle Jensen has recently described as a “*what-centered approach*” to process that “conceptualizes writing as a historical, theoretical, and material phenomenon that can be studied outside the instructional effort to control literate development” and which, he says, “assumes that the question of *what writing is* can take precedence over the question of *how to make writing work better*” (6, emphasis in the original). In this sense, I would describe the project as a what-centered approach to the problem of Writing Studies and/in contemporary Composition, more than to the problem of writing—concerned primarily with what Writing Studies *is* and can *be* in Composition, more than with how to make Composition “work better” (though, I have argued at various points that orienting to Writing Studies as a distinct sub-field in Composition and Rhetoric may serve Composition well in a number of ways).

However, as a rhetorical enactment, the project also seeks to collapse a binary distinction between process and product (i.e., the division between the processual arguments the text pursues and the rhetorical artifacts and rhetor making those arguments is elided). And the primary value of a rhetorically enactive “process” text is its capacity to bring about uptake of the processes it embodies/argues for by other (en)active agents. Therefore, I see the final crux of the project as its capacity to bring about *re-enactment* of the a) field-orientational and b) enactive methodologies I have employed by other potential/actual Writing Studies agents in response to c) the project itself as a set of

rhetorical enactments, which in Kathleen Campbell's construction, are texts that utilize an argumentative strategy and form in which "do as I say' . . . coincides with 'do as I do'" (18).

## **1. Implications and Limitations of a Field-Theoretical (Dis)orientation**

### *1.1 A Rhetoric of Fields (Or, Screening Field-Concepts and Field-Theories)*

This project is a rhetorical enactment of a "field-theoretical orientation," and that orientation is manifest in an approach to Writing Studies through a specialized rhetoric of fields. For example, my discussions of a "rising" writing in Chapter 1 (and of a "falling" English in this chapter 4), as well as the functions of field-emergence and change relative to institutional, disciplinary, and curricular matters throughout, are all metaphoric adaptations of a relatively standard field-based observational approach in the physical and social sciences applied to disorienting experiential, perceptual, and terministic phenomena. Physicists, for example, may look at fields to understand why something "rises" or "falls" as a result of interactions between various particles (matter) and gravity or electromagnetism (force) in a given observation. Likewise, in the social sciences, researchers may invoke the field-concept to explain the causes and effects of frustration or confusion among individuals in a given situation, or they may do so to examine sociological functions like change in groups as interactions between experience or behavior and an observed range of dynamic social and psychological factors conditioning that experience or behavior at a given time and place.

Traditionally, field-oriented scholars in a range of disciplines have used various *field-conceptions* to explain patterns of behavior as the result of dynamic relations

between force and matter in physical space or between social or psychological behaviors and dynamic variables that may be seen to influence agents, both individually and in groups. Field *theories*, on the other hand, are generally those relationalist approaches to phenomena that depend on or produce field-concepts in the observation of physical, social, and/or psychological interaction.<sup>1</sup> The main contribution I see this project as offering to the study of fields and field-phenomena is the adaptation and application of general field-concepts and field-theoretical approaches to patterns of dynamic force (e.g., orientation and disorientation) in the enactive behaviors of disciplined agents relative to subject-matter (e.g., writing) and dynamic variables that influence those behaviors (e.g., spatial occupation and placial approximation, surrounding, and mapping). Likewise, the main conceptual and theoretical contribution I see this project as offering to the study of writing, Writing Studies, and Composition, is the localized development and demonstration of field-concepts and field-approaches, without making these seem

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<sup>1</sup> Relationalism, a core component of most field theories, is essentially a specialized form of relativistic thinking, which, Chris Swoyer argues, “is not a single doctrine but a family of views whose common theme is that some central aspect of experience, thought, evaluation, or even reality is somehow relative to something else” (n. pag.). When I speak of the “relational” aspect of field-theoretical approaches, I am partially referring to what Karl Mannheim described as the “idea of the ‘existential relativity’ of certain knowledge items,” at least to the degree that the term does *not* refer to a moral or logical state in which “everybody and nobody is right” but, instead, that it suggests “a *relationalism* which says that certain (qualitative) truths cannot even be grasped, or formulated, except in the framework of an existential correlation between subject and object” (194, emphasis in the original). What modern field theory often does, whether in the physical or social sciences, is extend such existential frameworks beyond subject-object relations to see the same general problematic at work at social and particle-levels of material and psychological experience and behavior, not as specific to “knowledge items” but generally with and in fields such that relationships between entities and forces are understood to be always-already unfixed and co-constitutive.

idiosyncratic to or as totalizing the specialized concerns of compositionists or others devoted to the study of writing/composing.

For example, in Chapters 1 and 2, I argued that a potential Writing Studies field was first and foremost a problem of field-level disorientational and orientational forces, and that we should seek to get practically and conceptually oriented to and with/in Writing Studies as a field distinct but emergent from contemporary Composition. And, in Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that Writing Studies may be enacted by observing and behaviorally occupying its space with writing subjects and then acting as though in Writing Studies as a place that may be approximated, surrounded, and mapped with/in other places (like Composition or the University). Both of these arguments have been presented based on field conceptions and approaches that are not specific to either Writing Studies or Composition. So, an obvious implication is that the critical method (field-based orientationalist analysis) and the generative approach (orientationalist field-enactment) might be used to assess and address the (dis)orientational complex of any emergent field with/in an already-highly-actualized field or discipline—and certainly in any very positively disoriented field or discipline (like English), particularly where there is some impetus to re-orient and re-enact (like a cultural shift in value correlated with declining enrollment and/or challenges to funding and tenure). This would then seem to be a productive area for further research beyond Writing Studies (for example, in considering the rise of Creative Writing Studies in contemporary English/Literature, or in considering the positive disorientation of contemporary Rhetorical Studies across a range of disciplines in the modern Academy).

More immediately, however, the field-theoretical orientation of this project is also a significant potential limitation. Historically speaking, field-oriented scholarship has not often been taken up well in the study of writing and writing-related subjects. For example, in 1964, the first extended and direct attempt to introduce field theory to scholars interested in written texts was published and almost completely ignored. Edward Fagan's *Field: A Process for Teaching Literature* took on the herculean task of introducing an approximation of the "whole" of 20<sup>th</sup> century field theory to literary scholars and teachers. Fagan attempted to trace the historical development of a vast and disparate body of research in Physics, Biology, Anthropology, Sociology, Mathematics, Psychology, etc., and to codify their relations as a kind of "unified fields theory" of field-concepts and approaches. Fagan sought to demonstrate field theory's use in the teaching of literature in the American university, and he conceived of field-thinking in oddly limited terms as an approach to literary study in both the sense of an "external framework used in the organizing of a *course* in literature" and an "internal critical method used in getting at the significance of a given *piece* of literature" (1, my emphasis). That is, Fagan saw field theory in the study of written texts as primarily limited to its use as a tool with which to organize a lit course and as providing a terministic screen, to use Burke's concept, as a new literary critical theory for the analysis of texts (novels, in particular).

Likewise, a scant few (but notable) attempts have also been made to bring field theory into Composition and Rhetoric, usually through structural linguistic analysis of student writing and other materials via tagmemic theory. This last is unsurprising, given the fairly common occupation by linguists of the developing field of Composition in the

20<sup>th</sup> century and the explicit historical development of tagmemics directly from field theory in Physics.<sup>2</sup> Most, though, stop short of applying field-thinking to the nature of Composition and Rhetoric itself, with one notable exception. Speculating on the future of the discipline in 1955, Herbert Hackett projected a form Composition that is distinctly a field-theoretically-shaped construction:

The new discipline will be inter-disciplinary, with emphasis on inter-relationships of the individual in his social matrix. It will be interested in configurations, the larger gestalten, rather than on individual data themselves. It will be relative . . . and normative. Its relativism will be of a kind with Galileo's interest in variables, the functionalism of anthropology or the operational approach of atomic physics, and the field theory of Kurt Lewin.<sup>3</sup> It will strive to get at constellations of interdependent variables, open energy systems, circular rather than lineal, causal chains. There will be a corresponding valuation of spontaneity, unplanned inter-

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<sup>2</sup> As James Kinney writes, "taking off from the physical concepts of particle, wave, and field," Kenneth Pike, in particular, "developed tagmemics . . . which is not just a theory of language but a general theory about the structure of all purposive human behavior" (141).

<sup>3</sup> It is relatively common to think of field theory, if we think of it at all, as specific to scholars like Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., *Fields of Cultural Production* or others of his works). However, field theory is in fact a much larger and older endeavor ranging from early adaptations of fluid dynamics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see Martin on "Origins of the Field Concept") to approaches to problems in biology, number theory, anthropology, and to problems in the analysis of individual and group psychology, most notably in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century works of Kurt Lewin, referenced above—whose work on field theoretical approaches to the analysis of behaviors and experience both preceded and deeply influenced Bourdieu's more widely famous field-oriented writings. Bourdieu's field theories cannot be fully understood without recourse to Lewin, upon whose work Bourdieu routinely drew (though rarely cited), and it is Lewin's work that has more directly influenced my own field-thinking. Additionally, both Bourdieu and Lewin did, in fact, explicitly employ quasi-mathematical formulae in field-based sociological and psychological study—and a potential area for further research might actually be the use of field-theoretical formulae to develop new theories of writing and composing. Lewin's standard formula, for example, is "Behavior = Function of person and environment = Function of life-space" expressed as "Be = F [P, E] = F [L Sp]" ("Field Theory and Experiment," 878), and, for Bourdieu, "[ (habitus) (capital) ] + field = practice" (*Distinction* 101). What would be an analogous field theoretical formula for writing, and how might it guide analysis, pedagogy, and various compositional acts?

action rather than controls and formulae. The result will be a philosophical indeterminism, the abandonment of closed logical systems and causal absolutes, and a fear of all cut and dried systems, especially the mechanistic. (15)

There is an obvious anti-Current-Traditionalism in his description, and though his field-theoretically structured predictions may not have entirely come to pass, they do present a fairly ideal description of the Writing Studies I have attempted to project here. And so it is specifically interesting to note Hackett's simultaneous use of field-theoretical thinking and an explicit concern with "disciplinarity" in terms somewhat similar to the orientational, subject(ive), and locative issues I have raised throughout. "In outlining a discipline," he writes:

I am, of course, not discussing what the content of courses in skills should be, or suggesting that each of us will be competent in all aspects of the discipline, any more than I would suggest that a student of literature can range easily the whole discipline of literature. The discipline is the whole body of knowledge and skill, in which we each must find our *place*. (15, my emphasis)

However, the field-concept and field-theoretical approaches presented in these studies generally failed to catch on (beyond tagmemic rhetorics).

Chief among the reasons for this, I believe, are some problematic *terministic* approximations and surroundings. First, for example, I cannot imagine many of us get through advanced training in Composition and Rhetoric without encountering Composition's obsession with questions of disciplinarity. We are surrounded by disciplinary arguments, but the common discursive practice of using the term "field" interchangeably with "discipline" in the language of Composition and elsewhere has allowed (and continues to allow) a problematic assumption of identity between disciplinary and field-based approaches, which is a barrier to uptake.



As Burke reminds us, “any nomenclature necessarily directs the *attention* into some channels rather than others” (*LASA* 45, emphasis in the original). So, where the concern in Composition and Rhetoric is (or has been) with disciplinarity, field-ness is bound to take a back seat, unless a) field-ness is broadly posited as a kind of precondition for disciplinarity to the point where many of us feel the *need* to differentiate between them and b) field-ness is broadly understood to have at least the same level of complexity and significance as does disciplinarity. Where “field” and “discipline” are not only approximated but merged, on a terministic level, there is a tremendous persuasive and explanatory burden on any agent wishing to uncouple the two and to make “field” an active terministic screen capable of “affect[ing] the nature of our observations” (*LASA* 46) and our approach to any number of problems in either Writing Studies or Composition and Rhetoric. That is, any scholar wanting to explicitly (re)introduce “field” in a meaningful way has to figure out how to jump the hurdle of the terministic screen that is “discipline” to the point where audiences would be willing to concede that “discipline,” as a term, does not effectively cover all of what “field” is and can do for us. I have attempted this in various ways by considering relations *between* Writing Studies and Composition in terms of *both* field and discipline because, though the historical concern with Composition’s disciplinary status may make the general relevance of new approaches based in field-ness an easy sell, the approximal and re-orientational burden is high.

Second, and related to the first, “field,” as a complex terministic screen (and so a term that structures approaches to phenomena) historically arose primarily as a scientific

concern, and it is characterized by a remarkable dispersion across a variety of disciplines in the “hard” or “soft” Sciences (as well as in Mathematics) that produces a consequently stymieing variety of technical definitions of even the most basic field-theoretical terms, up to and including “field” itself (Martin). As a result, the practical demands of a Humanities-oriented scholar treating field theory comprehensively enough to make it immediately relevant and comprehensible to others without broad scientific training are (still) simply immense. Nearly half of Fagan’s book discussed earlier, for example, is devoted simply to establishing the basic terms of engagement. And, afterward, he sought primarily to demonstrate the efficacy of a field-based approach in establishing productive relationships between humanistic and scientific developments for literary scholars during an era in which the approximation and surroundings of humanistic and scientific inquiry was a highly active concern. The outcome was a book that introduced a fairly alien language—and *left* it as such—and that took as its exigency the possibility of bringing scientific developments *from* the study of various sciences’ field-concepts *into* the surroundings of literary textual study without any significant alteration of the screen, and which appeared as an academic and somewhat idiosyncratic exercise in literary critical and scientific interdisciplinarity.

So, to address these problems in this project, I have simply attempted to make field-concepts and field-theory more “local,” often pulling on field-approximable terms and concepts in Composition and Rhetoric rather than foregrounding a host of field-theoretical scholarship directly. For example, rather than treating a set of relations between scientific and humanities-based discourse, I’ve approached Writing Studies

with/in Composition through a set of terministic screens already operative in Composition and Rhetoric (discipline, writing, composition, space, place, etc.) and approximated them *as* field-concepts *in* Composition, and with/in some of the scholarly, disciplinary, curricular, and institutional surroundings that already structure much of what compositionists would have to contend with in approaching relations between Writing Studies and contemporary Composition. This is not to say that the localizing work is complete—for example, the question of who is or is not *in* Writing Studies remains something of an open question.

### *1.2 Localizing Identification in Writing Studies (Or, On Field-Oriented Grouping and Classification)*

I suggested at various points in the first three chapters that compositionists may be “potential” Writing Studies agents and, in the fourth chapter, that acting *as* though *in* Writing Studies may “actually” designate agents and their work *as* those *of* Writing Studies. This is not simply a semantic question but is a complex problem of behavior that is treated differently in a field-oriented approach than in a disciplinary one, and which we might again think of as a function of terministic screening between them. As Burke writes, “behavior must be observed through one or another kind of *terministic screen*,” and that screen “directs the *attention* in keeping with its nature” (*LASA* 49, emphasis in the original). Likewise, it is a problem of identification such that “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he

may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (*ARM* 20, emphases in the original).<sup>4</sup>

Beginning with the field-theoretical screen, the identification of a given individual as a Writing Studies agent is a question of behavioral and observational “grouping.” Where field is the *attention-directing* (that is, orientational) screen, grouping is not based on the kind of classificatory thinking by which, for example, we might say that because all Composition scholars are in one way or another studying “writing,” we are all, therefore, part of a deterministically constituted class of scholars we should identify as “Writing Studies agents.” In a field-theoretical approach, we are not looking for classificatory determiners of identity (either in agents, concepts, artifacts, or practices) because field theories are uniformly relational rather than deterministic and are concerned primarily with the understanding of behaviors and constitutive elements of a dynamism that observably affects those behaviors. As such, the identification of people *as those of* Writing Studies (or not) is primarily a question of the degree to which they are observed,

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<sup>4</sup> I might extend this a bit further as a problem of approximation in Burkean terms. “Basically, there are two types of terms,” he writes, “terms that put things together and terms that take things apart” (*LASA* 49). I would not argue that disciplinary terms necessarily “take things apart” while field terms “put things together”—but field-theoretical approaches are particularly well-suited to the identification of things and agents in terms of differences in “degree” (more than in “kind”) and in terms of “discontinuity” and “continuity.” In Burke’s example, “Darwin sees only a difference of degree between man and other animals. But the theologian sees a difference in kind. That is, where Darwin views man as *continuous* with other animals, the theologian would stress the principal of *discontinuity* in this regard” (*LASA* 50). A field-theoretical approach to identification would be less concerned with a difference in “kind” between Writing Studies and Non Writing Studies agents but would see agents as simply having “continuous” or “discontinuous” behaviors and experiences with other agents grouped by “degree.”

given a particular observational place-ment, to be experientially and relationally surrounded and approximated *with/in* the same “area of influence” (vis-à-vis Martin 14).

So, the goal (and real opportunity) is not to produce generally delimitative statements of determinate fact about *classes* of agents (e.g., “all writing studies scholars have the following features . . .”) but to make observations about the *relations* between constellated constituents as an observational *grouping* in order to understand their behaviors in situ. Kurt Lewin, one of the most influential field theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, provides a useful demonstration:

[I]t may be wrong to state that the blond women living in a town “exist as a group,” in the sense of being a dynamic whole characterized by a close interdependence of members. They are merely a number of individuals who are “classified under one concept” according to the similarity of one of their properties. If, however, the blond members of a workshop are made an “artificial minority” and are discriminated against by their colleagues they may well become a group with specific structural properties. (“Frontiers in Group Dynamics” 304)

Given Lewin’s example, as we consider who definitively is or is not a Writing Studies agent in a field-frame, then, we would have to set classification based on shared determinate properties (like having certain academic credentials) aside. Instead, we would attend to the potential for shared *experiential relations* of an interdependent group, always socially and psychologically emergent with/in a given moment, situation, or location because “the psychological environment has to be regarded functionally as a part of one interdependent field, the life-space, the other part of which is the person,” and “this fundamental fact is the keynote of the field-theoretical approach” (Lewin, “Field Theory and Experiment” 878). In effect, then, asking who definitively is or is not a Writing Studies agent is simply asking the wrong question.

Wherever we posit the possibility of a group of agents in the University whose attention is directed primarily to “writing” (rather than to “composition” or to “rhetoric,” for example), we are simply observing their having a similar property and using it only to identify individuals who then may be “classified under” that “one concept.” This would also be the case were I to identify as Writing Studies agents all people in the University or anywhere else who write. Doing so is not generally illogical, but my identification of these people as “Writing Studies agents” provides only an heuristical generalization that has limited use in predicting their behavior and experience because I have identified only a conceptual class of agents based on only a shared, determining property (writing). The error is that I would not here be attending to the “whole situation” of the psychologically and socially constituted “life-space” in and with which those individuals might actually find themselves occupied, which would bear on those agents’ experiences and behaviors and on their formation as a group or not. That is, I may have identified an *heuristical* “group,” but having done so does not necessarily suggest that those agents *experience* themselves *as* existing *in* it.

This “existing” bears also on the implicit problem of the “realness” of Writing Studies throughout the project. “Existence” in a Lewinian field “is given a pragmatic definition [as] anything having demonstrable effects” such that “the environment and the person as consciously perceived by the person are ordinarily included in the life space . . .” (Cartwright 162). As such, the “existence” of Writing Studies is determined by the degree to which it can be observed to have “demonstrable effects.” And the identificatory value of grouping agents with/in it is different than in my previous examples wherever we

observe an individual (or some constellation of individuals) as actually experiencing some rhetorical/psycho-social force exerted upon the “group” with/in a given life space and with observable consequence.

For example, wherever agents experience some sort of real or imagined discrimination against people primarily interested in “writing” by their Digital Comp or Creative Writing colleagues in a department meeting centered on proposed curriculum changes or against that same population primarily interested in writing by their Literary Studies counterparts in the English department, they exist as a group.<sup>5</sup> And, because we can suppose the perceived discriminatory force exerted on that group to enable some similar experience and behavior in response, which is dependent on the influential potential of the force itself to enable the group to “exist” *as* those *in* “Writing Studies,” we can also readily suppose the emergence of this group of writing-centric agents as a dynamic whole with specific structural properties which are “characterized by *relations* between parts rather than by the parts or the elements themselves” (Lewin, “Frontiers in Group Dynamics” 304, emphasis in the original). We can then more readily observe the behaviors of those individuals *as* Writing Studies agents grouped not by the very general property of each individual’s having an interest in “writing” but by the structures of interdependence that constitute the group and its behavior.

This lays bare the difference between field-theoretical and disciplinary approaches. In the latter, we can and do regularly identify disciplinary agents based on properties resident to the “parts or elements themselves” (*vis-à-vis* Lewin) in a

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<sup>5</sup> Please see Chapter 4 on “exclusions.”

conceptual (and political) classification. For example, I generally identify—and am often identified—as a Composition and Rhetoric scholar by exhibiting certain determinate properties (not “having blond hair,” of course, but having a professionally manifest interest in the teaching and learning of writing in a disciplinarily reified form, having/seeking advanced degrees in the subject, having graduate training in the discipline’s curriculum and apprenticeship under its reified canon of texts, institutions, other disciplinary agents, and so on). This is not to suggest that classifications of a disciplinary type are unproductive or illogical—only that a field-theoretical approach to the identification of agents *as* those of Writing Studies would simply not seek to establish a determinately defined group of people as being definitively those of a determinate “Writing Studies” class in the first place. Instead, we would attempt to make claims (as I have attempted to do throughout) based on an understanding of the structural dynamics of some observationally constituted and always-already dynamic whole of Writing Studies as a fundamentally open totality that can *only* be defined relationally, situationally, and with reference to forces and their behavioral/experiential effects.

We are not, then, determinately identifiable as Writing Studies agents because we have some defining property, like an interest in writing, a degree, or a faculty appointment. We are, however, situationally identifiable Writing Studies agents wherever our behavior, experience, and practice may be observed to be structurally and experientially interdependent parts of a dynamic, indeterminate whole of a Writing Studies that supplies forces and relations that have “existence” for us. And that may *include* the having of degrees, disciplinary apprenticeships, and faculty appointments in



“writing” departments or programs, but these are only relational elements of a larger dynamism. We are Writing Studies agents, in situ:

- 1) Wherever we are observably affected by a force (of discrimination in the example above; by [dis]orientation, enactment, occupation, approximation, and so on in the arguments I have presented) exerted on the group, “Writing Studies agents”—the “*identity*” of which would “be its uniqueness as an entity in itself and by itself, a demarcated unit having its own particular structure” (Burke, *ARM* 21, emphasis in the original) that, in Lewin’s terms, is an outcome of the group’s always-indeterminate “becom[ing]” together in “close relations”; or
- 2) Wherever the term, “Writing Studies agent,” has enough orienting and enactive capacity that, in Burke’s terms, “A can feel himself identified with B, or he can think of himself as disassociated with B” (*LASA* 49) or provides a “dramatic equivalent for an ‘entelechial’ pattern of thought whereby” an agent’s “nature would be classed according to [his/her] fruition, maturing, or ideal fulfillment . . .” (*ARM* 19).<sup>6</sup>

Wherever neither of these is the case, we are not necessarily Writing Studies agents, though the constitution of our life-spaces (which may include degrees, disciplinary training, and faculty positions) and the social fields we inhabit may potentialize our being so.

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<sup>6</sup> Please see Chapter 3 on enacting-as-entelechiating and Chapter 2 on enactment as a re-orientational method.

*1.3 On Field-Oriented Invention and Inquiry (Or, On Interdisciplinarity and Researching-Between)*

Beyond identification, the field-theoretical orientation employed has also implications for individual identification and inquiry conducted *as though with/in* Writing Studies and other fields. While field theory has often been used by researchers to investigate the experiences, behaviors, and groupings of agents, it has generally not been employed in the development of rhetorical invention strategies.<sup>7</sup> The capacity for doing so is a significant implication of this project and an area for further research.

For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, I have essentially pursued and produced this entire project by projecting the possibility of and then acting as though an agent (such as myself) can actually take up a position:

- a) With/in Writing Studies as a field, but particularly,
- b) With/in a Writing Studies that is, itself, a distinct place with/in the field of contemporary Composition and Rhetoric, and
- c) Then to conduct research *between* Writing Studies and Composition as a means by which to generate material and metaphoric contents *for* both.

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<sup>7</sup> The possible exception to this is in some work by the New Rhetoricians—though, by and large, “field” remains an underdeveloped concept therein. While Toulmin, for example, employs the term “field” in describing variant and invariant conditions for different classes of argument, there is little engagement with the larger body of scholarship *with/in* field theory to ground and develop the concept. In fact, as with others, Toulmin does not appear to have assumed that “field” required thorough treatment in pursuing his claims. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, likewise, argue that “each field of thought requires a different type of discourse” in the production and uptake of satisfactory arguments (3), though they, again, do not appear to have distinguished significantly between fields and disciplines. However, the idea that fields and arguments are significantly related is certainly consonant with a field-theoretical approach (please see Chapter 4 on localizing rhetorical action and/as argument).

However, some readers may reasonably take issue with this formulation as simply an oblique reference to “interdisciplinary” research (researching subjects between Writing Studies and Composition and Rhetoric). I would not argue with the characterization except to say that the relations between interdisciplinarity and field-based study are complex and bear scrutiny in this context, particularly given Composition’s historical concern and identification with interdisciplinary work.

As Robert Johnson writes in his contribution to the recent *CCC* symposium on the 1987 Conference on College Composition and Communication “Position Statement on Scholarship in Composition”:

If there are truisms, the interdisciplinary nature of writing studies is one. The fields that comprise the greater arena of writing studies are a hallmark and point of pride. In the country western sense, we were interdisciplinary before interdisciplinary was cool. . . . If writing studies has been a pioneer in interdisciplinary work, as the guidelines suggest, then it would follow that writing studies should not rest upon its interdisciplinary laurels, but instead should consider defining what we mean by interdisciplinary work in more detail and with more powerful language. (538)

Of course, there is no indication that Johnson’s use of the phrase “writing studies” in any ways refers to something distinct from Composition and Rhetoric, but the call to treat “interdisciplinary work in more detail and with more powerful language” can potentially be answered by a field-based approach to invention, inquiry, and research *between* Writing Studies and Composition.

The actual practice of interdisciplinary study tends to advantage a given scholar to narrow the scope and objective of researching a given subject *between* two or more established disciplines but typically *for* one of them as the target audience, though theoretical approaches to interdisciplinarity tend to posit a much more capacious

conception (e.g., Julie Thompson Klein’s “The Rhetoric of Interdisciplinary: Boundary Work in the Construction of New Knowledge”). That is, interdisciplinary study tends to be occupied with, in spatial/placial terms, bringing material, concepts, arguments, and so on as relevant subjects *from* the interstitial spaces constructed *between* disciplines and *into* the place of one or another of those disciplines.<sup>8</sup> Field-based inquiry is different—though it is “continuous” in Burke’s terms—as a *projective* practice by which an agent (whether reader or writer) conceptualizes a space in which to place various configurations of whatever subject is being researched and a field of readers, writers, and texts therein. This is not wholly dissimilar to interdisciplinary research, and I would suggest that interdisciplinary research may often depend on field-based inquiry in its early stages—though, in a field-based approach, a projective space/place for inquiry is not, itself, reducible to a discipline.

Interdisciplinary research would, then, be difficult to accomplish in a *pre-disciplinary* Writing Studies field with/in contemporary Composition and Rhetoric. Where the latter has a complex and institutionally reified (however often challenged) disciplinarity, the comparative lack of a non-identical Writing Studies discipline with which to *interdiscipline* the study, so to speak, would cut the endeavor off at the knees. Granted, this may sound like splitting hairs. But, in practical terms, I can, at this very moment, go to *College Composition and Communication* to find texts from which to draw disciplinary material. But, where Writing Studies is distinct from Composition, there is not necessarily some readily available, distinctly other-than-Composition journal

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<sup>8</sup> Please see Chapter 2 on relations between fields vs. disciplines and Chapter 4 on relations between spaces and places.

to which I might go that is already devoted to distinctly other-than-Composition scholarship *in* Writing Studies and that has been taken up by agents *as* such.<sup>9</sup> I can, however, conduct field-based inquiry by drawing subjects, concepts, and texts *from* Composition *into* Writing Studies and *for* both Writing Studies and Composition and Rhetoric audiences (as each of the preceding chapters does—hence, for example, the relatively complex and strategic way in which I have employed the collective pronouns “we” and “our” throughout). In this sense, conducting field-based research with/in Writing Studies is more a *post* than an *interdisciplinary* endeavor, given Nina Lykke’s definition of a postdiscipline as “disciplinelike structure that keeps up a transversal multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary openness and sustains moves toward a postdisciplinary university” (144).

An example increasingly well-known to compositionists would be conducting research in “Game Studies,” which has emerged as a postdisciplinary field of study. Game subjects are studied across a range of highly developed disciplines (including Composition and Rhetoric) but Game Studies has not yet been broadly enacted as a *fully* formed discipline and curriculum of its own.<sup>10</sup> If I conduct inquiry in Game Studies, I

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<sup>9</sup> Possible exceptions to this might be journals like *Writing on the Edge* or *Written Communication*, both of which bill as broadly interdisciplinary publications, though neither appears to draw a meaningful distinction between Composition and Writing Studies, at least not to the degree that they appear to anticipate actively serving and being published in/read by two distinct groups referred to by those terms.

<sup>10</sup> While not yet fully enacted, this is beginning—for example, a small number of universities now offer minors and/or certificates in “Game Studies” (e.g., the MIT Game Lab, the Digital Game Studies Minor at Miami University, the Certificate in Game Studies at Indiana University)—though, these curricula are found everywhere from explicitly “interdisciplinary” programs run by multiple departments (like MIT’s program)

necessarily begin by projecting a conceptual space occupied by studies of game and game-approximated subjects *with/in* and *across* various disciplines (Anthropology, Mathematics, Management, Composition, and Philosophy, just to name a few) without likely totalizing the field as any (or as any determinate combination) of those disciplines. And, if my study is *for* the field of Game Studies, I necessarily project a conceptual place constituted by an audience of individuals working with/in that “field of disciplines” for whom I intend my findings to be of use. Of course, this inventionary structure can conceivably make actually publishing the study difficult without some postdisciplinary venue with/in which to do so. However, this can be easily addressed by approximating, rather than merging, field-based inquiry with interdisciplinary structures.

Extending the previous example, I can easily project and see already enacted a *field* of Game Studies *inside* a disciplinary Composition and Rhetoric, though the field of Game Studies already meaningfully exists *beyond* the discipline of Composition. By conducting inquiry primarily *for* compositionists and *with/in* Game Studies, which is, again, a field without a fully formed discipline of its own distinct from its various disciplinary constituents, I can then potentially publish a project in Composition’s journals and compose in such a way as to anticipate Game Studies readers *beyond* Composition and Rhetoric. This solves my practical publication problem but comes with some limitations. Working to publish the study this way also limits (or enables) its capacity to serve the larger field of Game Studies by the degree to which I can reasonably anticipate Game Studies readers in other disciplines being actually oriented *to*

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to courses of study devoted to telecommunications (like IU’s), and few Game Studies *departments* that have so far emerged.

Composition as one of the myriad places *in* Game Studies to which they might go in conducting field-based inquiry themselves.

Further, this function has significant implications for how and why both authorial agents and their texts might be reasonably claimed *as* those of any particular discipline or field in individual inquiry, relative to but also beyond institutional, disciplinary, or curricular motives. Projecting a field of Game Studies with/in Composition, I might place therein, for example, Richard Colby, Mathew Johnson, and Rebekah Schultz Colby's anthology *Rhetoric/Composition/ Play Through Video Games: Reshaping Theory and Practice of Writing* or the range of articles in the special "Reading Games" issue of *Computers and Composition* (e.g., Apostel's "Thinking through Persuasive Play: Encouraging a Reflective Gaming Experience," Moberly's "Composition, Computer Games, and the Absence of Writing," and deWinter and Vie's "Press Enter to 'Say': Using Second Life to Teach Critical Media Literacy," among others). Through these artifacts, I can observe a sub-set of agents disciplined in Composition and Rhetoric and participating in a field of Game Studies *therein*, but I can also observe that this sub-set cannot totalize the discipline or field of Composition and Rhetoric. While an increasing number of compositionists are now observably oriented by the field and subjects of Game Studies, the majority of compositionists have not yet been trained and apprenticed in the study of games (and many compositionists do not engage games or Game Studies at all). Likewise, this sub-set of compositionists cannot totalize the range of participants in the broader field of Game Studies beyond Composition and Rhetoric. So, while I can claim these texts *as/in* Game Studies *with/in* Composition, I am likely to do so primarily

because that claim enables me to populate the field of my inquiry and see a place into and with which my work can be located. And I can do this independent of the fact that it is to the political and rhetorical advantage of any Game Studies discipline to be able to claim scholars and texts as their own.

Additionally, it is worth noting the mono-disciplinarity of this field-based inquiry, given that, in this case, I am observing primarily Game Studies research *only* in Composition and Rhetoric. Functionally speaking, this occurs regardless of the fact that the majority of the works I have listed draw on and may contribute to Game Studies work done in the broader field *beyond* Composition. Instead, the constellations of these writers function, for me as a compositionist, as something like translators and colonists (meant apolitically, to the extent that this is possible). They make of Composition something larger—a constellations of agents and texts that incorporates what is, by a function of their actions, now-made and not ready-made Composition subjects<sup>11</sup> without the indeterminate whole of the field of Game Studies being claimable by Composition and Rhetoric.

Though the relations between field-based inquiry and interdisciplinary research is an area of further study (I'm tempted to speculate, for example, that all

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<sup>11</sup> “We do not find subject-matters ready made,” writes Richard McKeon, “nor do we encounter problems distributed precisely in fields” (17 *The Uses*). Instead, “we make subject-matters to fit the examination and resolution of problems, and the solution of problems brings to our attention further, consequent problems, which frequently require the setting up and examination of new fields” (17-18 *The Uses*). However, from an *enactive* orientationalist perspective, finding *is* making wherever the goal is the production of subjects *as* field-enactive tools *between* fields and disciplines (such as Writing Studies and Composition). Please see Chapter 3 on subjects as entelechial “substances.”



interdisciplinary—and even mono-disciplinary research—depends on some form of field-based inquiry as authors project a field of knowledge/texts/authors with/in which to invent and place arguments, though proving that would be a complex project in its own right), relating the two has been one of the central inventional methodologies of this project. And, as with Game Studies, a pre-disciplinary Writing Studies with/in a non-identical Composition and Rhetoric specifically *requires* field-based inquiry in order to research and argue *as though in* it. Of course, it is not necessarily true that a technical understanding of field-concepts and field-theories is required to do so; however, as this project demonstrates, a field-theoretical orientation to inquiry certainly provides a useful set of tools in thinking critically about and operationalizing such inquiry.

## **2. Implications and Limitations of an Enactive Methodology and Text**

### *2.1 On the Field of Enactment in Composition (Or, Enactment as a Research Area)*

Given that *further* enacting Writing Studies is the goal, the degree to which any individual's work in and from field-based inquiry predicts *re-enactment* by other agents is a significant final concern. Like orientation and field, enactment is a significantly under-theorized but widely utilized term in Composition, and so a complex methodology of field-enactment *though* writing is also a potential barrier to uptake and an area for further research. Typical uses of “enactment” in the language of compositionists appears most often not to be tied to any particular methodological study of the term in any field or discipline, and many of us (myself included before this project) often employ the term seemingly without a sense that its meaning and function might be contestable or suggest

an inventory method or form—though still often in ways that imply a technical complexity without seeming to warrant explicit definition.<sup>12</sup>

For example, imagine beginning a field-based inquiry of “Enactment Studies” with/in Composition and Rhetoric and coming across Marilyn Cooper’s interdisciplinary *CCC* article, “Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted.” The piece is demonstrative in that a) it does not define enactment, though the concept is deeply entailed with the argument presented; b) it draws concepts from other fields and disciplines (Neuroscience and Philosophy) in pursuit of its argument, which is for a complexity-systems approach in Composition and Rhetoric based on the claim “that agency is an emergent property of embodied individuals” (421); and c) it does so in order to bring that proposition to bear on the thinking and practices of compositionists. The goal of the piece is re-enactment—as is the case with most arguments published in *CCC*, though I hesitate to say all—to see the approach she forwards enacted by other agents with/in Composition. Likewise, the article works to contribute to the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric, not necessarily *instead of* but simply *more* than to Philosophy or Neuroscience—or, more to the point, of “Enactment Studies,” which might reasonably be construed as field occupied by the places and subjects of a range of disciplines (Composition, Rhetoric, Public Policy, Theater, Legal Studies, etc.) where some construction of enactment as a subject is a

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<sup>12</sup> I offer this point, additionally, as a way of intimating the orientational and disorientational potential of studying the term and method of enactment as, in, and for Writing Studies. Please see the discussions of the orientational and disorientational potential of terms in Chapters 1 and 2 for similar examples.

significant concern. Only a reader *projecting* a field of “Enactment Studies” with/in which the piece might be placed and contribute would meaningfully *make* it otherwise.<sup>13</sup>

Composition’s “enactment” appears to be generally a putting-in-to-practice and a making-substantial of some practical potential, construct, or claim, as even a cursory review of the term’s usage in our published discourse quickly bears out. For a few representative examples, this pattern is observable wherever:

- a) We suggest that a potential or claim that precedes a practice might be “enacted,” e.g., “as we consider our own roles of social agency we can insist more firmly on the democracy of writing and the need to enact pedagogies that permit connections and communication with the communities outside classroom walls” (Gere, “Kitchen Tables” 91);
- b) We describe an approach or construction that precedes a representation, demonstration, or performance as being “enacted,” e.g., “in the predecessor volume to Tate, Rupiper, and Schick, *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*, Janice Lauer did a far better job of explaining how to enact a rhetorical approach in the classroom” or that “some courses involve a fairly

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<sup>13</sup> So, though it may be classified as an interdisciplinary artifact, I may *also* identify Cooper’s article as a field-study *with/in* specific instances in which either Cooper or her readers experience the text as “existing” (vis-à-vis Lewin) *in* the field of “Enactment Studies,” for example, which can be easily characterized as a field of inquiry but would be very difficult to claim as an extant discipline. However, our orientations as scholars are, to varying degrees, conditioned by disciplinarity in ways that structure our conceptions, methods, and audiencial intentions. For example, where I am a disciplined compositionist, I am likely to begin by imagining and then seeking to get oriented within a projective field of “Enactment Theory” or “Enactment Studies” *with/in* Composition, from which I may then turn my attention to a *larger* “field of enactment” that incorporates uses and discussion of the concept elsewhere.

elaborate enactment of writing as an extended, recursive, complex process” (Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 672 and 661, respectively), or that “as we talked with a subgroup of study participants, we listened hard as, one after another, they told us about what we have come to call writing performances: students’ live enactment of their own writing” (Fishman et al 225-26); or c) We project a texts, individual’s, or group’s conscious or unconscious positioning as preceding an “enactment” of a racial, cultural, spiritual, class-based or otherwise constructed social subjectivity or expectation in discourse, e.g., “analyzing the relationship between genre and subject formation, I locate invention at the intersection between the acquisition and articulation of desire—the site at which writers obtain, negotiate, and enact specific social commitments, orientations, and relations . . .” (Bawarshi 13) or “in order to respond more effectively to those who write about religion, we would benefit from extended conversation with the ways that faith is ‘enacted’ in discourse and sustained through particular kinds of textual and interpretive practice” (Rand 350).

Anecdotally, I can say that my own discursive practice has often been consonant with these patterns. However, a recent classroom experience comes to mind that is not well accounted for in list above—a form of enactment that incorporates all those thus far constellated but that adds the construction of enactment as a *rhetorical* system, as a approximately rhetorical form and strategy.

In a recent course on rhetoric and genre in business and professional writing, I introduced enactment as a term in *Composition and Rhetoric* when a student began

developing a digital essay on rhetorical uses of social media for professional applications. “Enactment,” I told her, “is a form of argument in which the text *puts into practice* or *performs* what is being proposed, rather than only advocating for or describing that proposal.” When my student asked for resources to further investigate the concept, I remember being surprised to realize I had some basic demonstrations of enactment I might show her but little in the way of specific research in Composition, either to further direct her to or to ground my own pedagogy. I had offered a sense of the term as though it were simply “in the air” in Composition, but that it referred to a complex, technical concept.<sup>14</sup>

I would, then, add this to my projective field of “Enactment Studies” in Composition *and Rhetoric* as a fourth significant usage to the previous list as wherever:

d) We describe “enactment” as a performative form or strategy of inventing a text that directly embodies its argument.

This addition incorporates the same basic enactive features of performance and making-substantial as the others but specifies a particular purpose for employing those features as a means to some other end (persuasion). Additionally, this *rhetorical* enactment complicates the problem of precedence arising in the other three forms identified in ways that speak to some of the implications and limitations of an enactive method and text.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> A publically available version of this project may be viewed online—and, though the piece accomplished the stated learning goals for the assignment, I believe my failure to more fully help my student conceive of the potential complexities of rhetorical enactment is immediately evident in the text: <http://www.pinterest.com/innovatioOER/>.

<sup>15</sup> This final *rhetorical* form is a result of a rhetorical orientation with/in Composition, an orientational outcome of disciplinary training and pedagogical practice in Composition

## 2.2 On Rhetorically Enactive Forms and Strategies (Or, Toward an Enactive Rhetoric of Texts and Agents)

In terms of agents, Davis Houck defines enactment, “as conceptualized by rhetoricians,” to be “an embodiment and performance of that which the speaker recommends to his/her audience; the speaker represents the views that s/he is advancing” and provides an example in Pliny’s “referring to Trajan as ‘a living example’ of” Liberal Arts “precepts” (43). That is, Trajan and his actions, as recounted by Pliny and according Houck’s analysis, are rhetorically enactive of a field with/in which he and his actions may be placed (The Liberal Arts).

In terms of texts themselves, rhetorical enactment in Angela Ray’s formulation is a strategic and direct representation of a rhetor as “proof of his arguments” (389) in order to “justify his right to speak and to establish himself as an exemplar of possibility” (390). A *rhetorical* enactment *in/as* a text is a performance of doing what is proposed such that the division between the textual performance and the argument made by that text is elided and such that the text and its author both operate as actualized proof *of* potential.

Rhetorical enactment, then, specializes the conditions under which a reader might see this

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*and Rhetoric*, by which I am advantaged to look farther afield for “Enactment Studies” (or anything else) in rhetorical scholarship from the vantage that a great deal of “rhetorical scholarship” exists that is only with/in Composition by a complex set of approximations, surroundings, and mappings. That is, I can project—as modern compositionists have done for decades—a field of Rhetorical Studies both *with/in* and *beyond* Composition. And, using that projective field, we can construct a more specialized form of enactment (or any other subject) by approximating, surrounding, and mapping it relative to rhetorical forms, strategies, acts, artifacts and argumentative/persuasive purposes.

project *as* an enactment *of* Writing Studies, rather than only a set of arguments *about* it, with/in Composition and Rhetoric. It must be seen both to “embody” and “represent” the proposed methods of getting oriented in and enacting the projective field and also to be a/effective proof of the possibility of doing so.

A particularly useful example that connects both enactive agents and texts comes from Barbara Jordan’s 1976 keynote address to the Democratic National Convention, which began with the claim that what distinguished this particular moment in the history of the Democratic National Party, and American national politics in general, was that she—Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, an African-American woman from the Deep South and rising star in the party—was the keynote speaker. This is, singularly, the most often cited treatment of rhetorical enactment, originally presented in this context by Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson. In their essay, the authors define enactment as a “recurrent rhetorical form, a reflexive form” in which, again, proof of that which is argued is incarnated directly in the agent and/or text that does the arguing (9).<sup>16</sup>

Analyzing Jordan’s speech, they write:

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<sup>16</sup> Aside from the range of scholarship that preceded or emerged during the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century Theory Wars regarding authorial intent, readers may here be thinking of some more contemporary discussions of “embodied rhetoric” and definition in Composition—e.g., Abby Knoblauch’s recent article in *Composition Studies*, “Bodies of Knowledge: Definitions, Delineations, and Implications of Embodied Writing in the Academy”—though I consider enactment a different concern in this particular context. While, in general, I believe there is rich work yet to be done investigating relations *between* enactment, authorial intent, and embodiment in writing, I would suggest that a) embodied rhetoric is an undesirable metaphor for rhetorical enactment because it requires a considerable reduction of the developing field of embodied rhetoric in Composition and its manifold concerns, b) embodied writing/rhetoric constitutes a complex-enough orientation and field all on its own that appropriate treatment of it here is too great a task to be accomplished in brief, and c) enacting a *field* rather than *only* an *argument* allows

[F]or hundreds of black and female delegates and for millions of other listeners, she embodied the idea she expressed . . . “And I feel that, notwithstanding the past, my presence here is one additional piece of evidence that the American dream need not forever be deferred.” She herself *was* the proof of the argument she was making. (9, emphasis in the original)

Jordan’s address is both a formal and strategic enactment that elides the division between the argument (“the American dream need not forever be deferred”) and who (Barbara Jordan) or that which (her speech) presents the argument to auditors. It bears out the sense of an enactive agent as a “living example” (via Houck) offered to both serve as an ethotic appeal by which the speaker establishes herself “as an exemplar of possibility” (via Ray) and also her text as doing the same (i.e., the very *existence* of Jordan’s speech and her presence at the podium is reflexively presented as *proving* the argument the speech pursues).<sup>17</sup>

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the possibility of an embodied rhetoric *therein*, and that treatment of enactment *as* embodied rhetorical *intention* collapses a distinction I believe will be valuable to maintain should Writing Studies or the methods I have forwarded here become more broadly actualized in the future.

<sup>17</sup> Rhetorically-oriented readers will here be thinking of a relation to ethos, which serves an important function, and ethos *in/as* field-enactment is another potential area for further research. A traditional locative metaphor employed broadly by compositionists and rhetoricians, the ethotics of strategic and formal enactment are not simple and rehearse the jointly divisional and elisional systems of rhetorical enactment in general. As James Beitler observes, “Ethos is typically translated from Greek into English as ‘character’; however, many scholars have noted that this translation does not do justice to the term’s etymology. Both Michael Hyde and S. Michael Halloran highlight that the ancient Greeks frequently used the term to refer to a ‘dwelling place’ or ‘habitual gathering place.’ Nedra Reynolds, too, calls attention to similar uses of the term: citing Arthur Miller’s work, she notes that, in addition to ‘character,’ the Greek roots of ethos are ‘habit and ‘custom.’ The singular form of the term, she continues, referred to ‘an accustomed place,’ while the plural often referred to one’s ‘haunts or abodes’.” (4) Approximating these valences, we can justifiably construe ethos as a conceptual tool (character) established relative to an adopted position (dwelling or habitual gathering place). And “the recovery of these etymological facets of the term,” Beitler continues, prompts Reynolds to note that ethos



This is no simple relation, however, as this formulation suggests a complex formal and strategic relationality between subjects and locations. So, I would stress that rhetorical enactment, like the forms of enactment discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, remains a locative and subject(ive) problem. It is the total locative and subject(ive) complex that construct agents' and texts' capacity to employ enactive forms and strategies, and the rhetorical capacity of strategies to be enacted *as/in* forms is paramount. Further, this locative relation is a crucial component of the argument I have presented/performed in this project. It provides an essential grounding for the claim that, as a text *in* the field of Writing Studies with/in Composition and Rhetoric, the project has itself been rhetorically enactive throughout, which is deeply dependent on the locative relations between the kinds of enactive strategies and forms represented in Jordan's speech.

### 2.3 "*Ich bin ein Schriftstudium*" (Or, On Locating the Final Call to Re-Enact)

In her mostly unpublished 1988 doctoral dissertation, rhetorical critic Kathleen Campbell calls attention to this locative and subject(ive) system *beyond* the provision of rhetorical proof by arguing for a conception of enactment "as both a rhetorical strategy to

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"encompasses the individual agent as well as the location or position from which that person speaks or writes." As such, the ethotics of enactment would seem to already call forth the field metaphor, and ethos is obviously a significant concern where we seek field-enactive effects because doing so depends on successfully appealing to the audience's perception of the rhetor as having enough credibility or capacity to speak with authority on behalf of a field in the first place ("I practice what I preach" or "I have done what I ask you to do"—generally relative to the classical "good man speaking well" or "good man skilled in speaking" constructions).

be used by rhetors and as a rhetorical form to be apprehended by auditors” (161).<sup>18</sup>

Building on canonic examples in the public addresses of political figures and on several of her own examples in various other genres (literary, advertising, and film), Campbell actively positions rhetorical enactment as a form *with/in* both rhetorical acts and artifacts differently and procedurally, though in a fairly traditional structure in which:

[An enactive] rhetorical act is conceptualized as rhetoric that is created in two stages. First, the rhetor creates the rhetoric, with implied auditors in mind, by making certain rhetorical choices that will implement her rhetorical strategies and achieve her rhetorical purpose. Second, the rhetor personally “performs” or “acts out” the rhetoric before actual auditors. . . . A rhetorical artifact, on the other hand, is defined as the trace or tangible evidence of either stage one or stage two of a rhetorical act. (27-28)

We are left, then, with a conception of formal enactment *as* located both *in* the invention of individual agents and *in* the texts produced by that inventionary process.

Further, Campbell’s position is that “in order for a rhetor to use enactment as a rhetorical strategy and have it be recognized by auditors *apparently* requires that (1) the rhetor *explicitly point out* to auditors that he practices what he preaches, and (2) auditors can see for themselves that the rhetor embodies his argument” (7-8, emphases in the original). Though I have done so myself in this project, partly in response to Campbell’s argument, I would not say that the first part of her claim is necessarily true (readers are perfectly capable of seeing a rhetor as “practicing what he/she preaches” in many cases without necessarily requiring the rhetor to say so). However, her explicit introduction of a

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<sup>18</sup> As I mentioned earlier, enactment is a widely used but significantly under-theorized term, and Campbell’s project (*Enactment as a Rhetorical Strategy/Form in Rhetorical Acts and Artifacts*) is, to the best of my knowledge, the only extended and direct study of enactment as both strategy and form available. A small section of the project was published, apparently with little attention paid it, in *Central States Speech Journal*, though the most useful arguments are presented in the dissertation itself.

third enactive location into the set—in the audience’s perception of the text and its author *as* formally enactive (all other rhetorical studies of enactment I have found incorporate this feature, but Campbell’s project appears to be the only one to actually parse this out)—provides the missing (and key) strategic component.

A given text’s or rhetor’s potential to *be* enactive is less a question of whether or not it exhibits certain generic features than the degree to which its auditors perceive it *as* an embodiment of the argument its author provides *with/in* and *through* the text as a suasive technology. Campbell’s and others’ construction of enactment as an argumentative strategy and form in which, “‘do as I say’ perfectly coincides with ‘do as I do’” (18) moves enactment beyond simple formalism to its final surroundings such that the enactive *effect* may be realized—in the audience’s *perception* of the text and its author, and in that audience’s *response*. For an agent (such as myself) to effectively enact a Writing Studies field and orientation *through* a text (such as this project) requires not only that auditors perceive of the text and my authorship of it *as* enactive, but also that this perception calls for future action beyond the moment of the text itself.

Consider, for a final example, John F. Kennedy’s iconic “*Ich bin ein Berliner*” speech, the refrain of which Campbell and Jamieson argue is a “reflexive” and “dramatic *enactment* which says, in effect, ‘do as I did—come to Berlin’” (19, emphasis in the original). Remembering their construction of enactment as a recursive, reflexive form, Kennedy’s enactive refrain is, by definition as a refrain, recurrent. Further, that refrain, as an enactive component *with/in* the text (his speech, that is) is also reflexive in that it

effects a formal embodiment of its claim, both as synecdoche for the whole of the argument and as a strategic embodiment *with/in* Kennedy himself as the speaker.

The refrain, then, functions as an approximated *set* of recursive and reflexive occupations that create a certain irreducible, relational circularity *between* the speaker, the text, and the refrain itself, as well as *between* the argumentative call to action and the action already taken (i.e., Kennedy's adopting a metaphoric position *as* a citizen of Berlin *in* the larger metonymic surroundings of Berlin *as* Western Society *in* the Cold War Era and New Frontier Politics). As a strategically and formally enactive argument *in* a text, it is then constructed to *be* recursively embodied in both the rhetor, the individual textual component, the text as a whole, *and* the audience's perception of the whole interaction as calling for his/her *own* action in response.

Though I am obviously no one's JFK, my implicit refrain, from start to finish, has been "come to Writing Studies," and this text's implicit refrain has been "*ich bin ein Schriftstudium*" (emphasis on "*ein*," of course). The suasive capacity and enactive effectiveness of the project, then, is largely dependent on the degree to which its readers conceive of the text, of my authorship, and of the methodological employment of field-based inquiry *between* Writing Studies and Composition and Rhetoric not only to embody the field and orientation I have pursued but also to be persuaded through that embodiment to do as they/I have done. In effect, to get oriented *with/in* and act *as* though *in* a Writing Studies that meaningfully exists, actually in this project and potentially elsewhere in the future.

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