THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES

THESIS TITLE: Distilling Disciplines: Metaphor, the Writing Process, and the Negotiation of Self in the Postmodern Classroom

AUTHOR: Raymond A. Morris

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: April 23, 2007

THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES

Kenneth Mendoza
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR (TYPED)

Yuan Yuan
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER (TYPED)

Robin Keehn
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER (TYPED)

4-23-2007
Chapter I—Recipe for Success? Self, Metaphor, and the Writing Process

From the outset, Karen Spear, in her essay “Controversy and Consensus in Freshman Writing: An Overview of the Field,” excoriates the confusion surrounding “the freshman writing course” that “is surrounded by mixed ideologies and philosophies, laden with multiple tasks and often contradictory expectations, and taught from oversimplified, truncated, and unexamined notions of rhetoric” (319). By comparison, James Berlin’s 1984 monograph, Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges resounds with similar concern over rhetoric’s topple from grace off its once-lofty perch, a position it held, highly esteemed, until about the mid-19th century. The reason for this Adamitic fall, Berlin convincingly states, is found in the examination of the various conceptions of reality, human nature, and language—“the noetic fields,” as he calls them—and their relation to the overall social structures that influence them (2). From 1880 through the 1890s once the discourses within rhetoric utilizing these noetic fields began to splinter off into various specialties, the standing of both rhetoric and composition studies began to slip in stature. Berlin implicates this demeaned status of these two disciplines and the systematic dismantling of rhetoric on Capitalism’s increasing influence. Calling the curriculum that was taught and the methods used “an assembly-line conception of education,” he attributes the results of this splintering that enabled persuasive discourse—which appeals to the emotions and the will—as relegated solely to oratory; hence the Speech class was born. The split also consigned the writing course to the Arctic confines of reason and understanding, from which Composition took its
direction. Simultaneously, as the focus and purpose of imaginative discourse narrowed considerably, the recently developed literature faction took responsibility for its teaching. In this new configuration, safely ensconced within its comfortable abode, its hearth fiercely aglow, the literature department became the haven—the sole haven—by which invention and imagination warmed its bones (9).

Given their precipitous slide or abrupt rise in status, depending on which discipline one considers, today’s college English curriculums stubbornly persist in treating each of these disciplines as separate entities, distinct parts with distinctive statures, all subsisting as one department, albeit somewhat begrudgingly. I. A. Richards, in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, establishes a method by which metaphor can be used to explain these present-day disparities, but his methodology is best introduced in his treatment of metaphor in poet Denham’s ode to the Thames River. The lines Richards analyzes are as follows:

\[
O \text{ could I flow like thee and make thy stream} \\
\text{My great exemplar as it is my theme!} \\
\text{Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;} \\
\text{Strong without rage; without o’erflowing, full.}
\]

In Richard’s methodology, a metaphor consists of two parts; the first, the original idea, or the principal subject, is called “the tenor.” The second part comprises what the original idea is being compared to, or the imagined nature of what is being compared. This component Richards calls “the vehicle.” Distancing himself from what Berlin calls 18th century rhetoric—the stodgy Common Sense Realism of Campbell and Blair that applies an inductive method of reasoning to devising truth in
Recipe for Success?

terms both specific and vivid, and hence without invention—Richards allows metaphor not only to compare like objects or ideas, but rather to contrast the disparities of unlike objects or ideas that will concretize meaning through “the efficacy of signs by which those signs” are unified, regardless of context (93), or what Burke would call “perspective by incongruity” (90). Therefore, by reading Denham’s ode, “the tenor” is the poet’s mind itself; “the vehicle” is the river. In today’s canon of poetry, the comparison of a mind and river could hardly be called original or dissimilar, given the propensity of a flow of thoughts to behave like a surging river, yet in this example it is not necessarily an implied dissimilarity between tenor and vehicle that produces our incongruous perspective. Instead, it is the final couplet that produces an exchange of disparate word meanings “super-imposed upon a perceived world which is itself a product of an earlier metaphor” (Richards 108-109). In other words, reality, truth, and meaning are projected by the stacking of metaphors awaiting our unique and congruous interpretation; one metaphor begets another. Furthermore, metaphor is a coupling of ideas or objects. One component of the trope is meaningless by and of itself because by isolating “one agent in a drama...one advocate in a dialogue,” only one position and one point of view, is being considered. Relativism, thus, becomes the unfortunate result of this isolation of components since “relativism sees everything in one set of terms” (Grammar of Motives 512).

Consequently, by dissecting each of the last two lines of Denham’s poem by metaphoric comparison, the incongruity produced is not the mind/river comparison, but the actions spoken characterized in each of them: In the first line of the final
couplet, the “deep, yet clear” river speaks of the danger in its crystalline, hypnotic depths, while the “gentle, yet not dull” mindset of the poet is a self-conscious warning to the mind to stay sharp and to never fall into the lull of complacency. Likewise, “strong without rage” and “without o’erflowing, full” conjoin river and mind, vehicle and tenor, respectively, but the individual character or sensibility of each is portrayed as either infallible or insatiable—a river never displays the indignant passion of rage; a growing mind fills with knowledge, but it never overflows. Denham’s ideas, therefore, speak of the unity achieved by the coupling characteristics of mind and river, their positions reversed from their original configuration of tenor first, vehicle second, their directions shifting, but like the river the mind emulates, it remains calm, but ever powerful, potentially dangerous, yet devoid of the destructive rage that could destroy or alter its meandering course (Richards 121).

Using a similar methodology, the components of the English department, comprised of rhetoric studies, composition studies, and literature theory can be viewed as the ingredients fed into a distillery apparatus. Therefore, the English Department becomes the original idea, or the tenor; the distillery apparatus itself, the vehicle, becomes the object to which the idea or entity is compared or contrasted. But how does this incongruous analogy foster an overview of over 2,500 years of a tradition and its methodologies? The answer to that question is found in the ageing and metamorphosis of the original ingredients into a different substance, whose optimal quality is attributed to the ingredients’ superiority.
Recipe for Success?

In a simplified version of the distilling process of alcoholic beverages, for example, a unique recipe of fermented mash from various grains (or fruit juice) is heated until the alcohol produced by the fermentation process begins to vaporize. Because water vaporizes rapidly at alcohol’s boiling point, the precarious task of removing the water from the distillate is a prolonged and delicate process of distilling and redistilling the condensed substance until all the water is removed. Once pure alcohol is produced, it’s unique taste and character comes from the type and quality of its original ingredients. Therefore, an optimum product is produced by the quality of its initial ingredients and by the attention paid to the purity of the distillate (Butt 240-242).

Prior to the distillation process that began to occur in the English departments over forty years ago—as rhetoric was examined and reexamined for relevance, as composition studies shipped out on its maiden voyage toward legitimation by its incursion into the application of theory and by offering a host of post-graduate programs, and as literature studies broadened its theoretical curriculum while toppling its hegemonic canon—a good question that should have been asked (and probably was—repeatedly): What constitutes a recipe for success in the curricula taught, and how is that success measured?

Today, as our literary distillate goes through its ageing process, the questions raised above remain valid. Because of the recent movements (e.g., writing across the curriculum, process movement, social epistemic rhetoric, pluralism and postmodernism, among others) affecting English departments, however, these
questions become more complicated and the temptation exists to qualify their answers under each individual discipline, as opposed to tackling those issues as a unified department. Not unlike metaphors, one question begets another. For example, keeping the pedagogical success of the department in mind, goals become paramount. Is the department as a whole conjoined to produce good writers out of our students? Given that, is good writing defined as teaching students to surrender to the conforms of the academic discourse community? Or are we privileging critical thinking as a means to connect and validate our overall discipline to the demands of the outside (capitalist) world? Is our elective curriculum an arbitrary smattering of various course offerings, or they geared toward accomplishing a prescribed pedagogical goal? And finally, what is the basis of our curriculum? Are we teaching as an unified department or as three separate entities, whose goals exist under three different paradigms?

Getting back to our distillery metaphor, the optimal results of the questions raised above when acted upon in a forthright, even altruistic manner, is predicated by the original ingredients (fermented by years of discourse that coagulates into a fine fermented mash) measured in the proper quantities. What happens, however, when one discipline is privileged over the other two? Given the intoxicating properties of our resulting elixir extracted from our collegiate mash, our disproportionate recipe results in power being wielded by the privileged discipline, which, inebriated by its new-found ability, effects, as Susan Miller describes, quoting Richard Ohmann, a tendency to establish:
Recipe for Success?

‘a superstructure—laws, institutions, cultures, beliefs, values, customs’—that controls ‘a whole way of life...supported by ideological institutions, which effectively enlists almost everyone in the party of the ruling class, sets limits to debate and consciousness, and in general serves as a means of preserving and reproducing class structure’ (7).

At that juncture, the other two disciplines are damned to second-class citizenship. This example illustrates what happened to composition studies in the university at the turn of the 20th century. Rhetoric, meanwhile, after classical studies were abandoned in the mid-1800s, had already lost a lion’s share of its prestige by that time. Literature studies, consequently, emboldened by the unfolding of these events and the inception of literary theories like New Criticism with its attention to form, gained a foothold as the darlings of academic creativity and invention.

In addition to demonstrating the relations between disciplines, however, my distillery apparatus metaphor also assumes the teacher (a personified representation of all teaching methods occurring over time) as distiller and the student subject as the imbiber of the resulting distillate. The student samples the distillate that either inebriates him beyond his inhibitions, establishing agency, or it imposes a drunkenness that befuddles his senses, impairing any means of ever acquiring a “will to power” that affords a means invoking the “drama of moral choice” (On Symbols and Society 125). In the composition classroom, this dynamic of either/or is especially pronounced.
Therefore, to establish how this agency, or lack of it, is acquired in a composition classroom, given the subjugation of composition studies over the years, a history of it and its disciplinary ally, rhetoric, is in order. Their histories and their significance as essential ingredients in the distillation process will be covered and argued over the course of this essay. First, however, I will establish my game plan.

*  

The process of writing, it should not be contrarily argued, is essential—either directly or indirectly—to each discipline of the English department. Furthermore, the processes of both reading and writing prove to be engaged in a reciprocal relationship. Since written discourse, as Andrea Lunsford stipulates, quoting Martin Nystrand, is not the sole by-product of some prescriptive cognitive formulation that sequesters the writer to the confines of his own unique thoughts, it can be said that the process of writing shares a dependent relation with the process of reading, thereby producing a social situation in more ways than one. At its most basic level, however, this social situation is produced by “literate individuals (who) write on the premises of the reader and (who) read on the premises of the writer” (86).

This relationship is deepened by what Anthony Petrotsky calls a “transaction,” a method by which the reader makes meaning from a text “in terms of her own experience.” Each successful and meaningful reading of another’s writing, therefore, informs that writer’s writing process (Bizzel 195), which, in turn, suggests that the writer’s writing process informed by her reading dictates the success of the resultant
written product, which enhances someone else’s successful reading by better clarifying that reader’s understanding of their own experience.

This dependent relationship of the reading and writing processes, of readers and writers engaging meaning by their social interaction is not unlike the relation between the components of metaphor, the tenor and the vehicle. To I. A. Richards, “meaning (is) the delegated efficacy of signs by which (these signs) bring together into new unities the abstracts...which are the missing parts of their various contexts.” These abstracts, suffering these out-of-context afflictions, whose meaning is destroyed when viewed or pondered in isolation, are then compared or contrasted with other abstracts resulting in a word or phrase that serves as a substitute, not singular in meaning, but representing “a combination of general aspects.” That word of substitution is metaphor (93).

Within the mind of the writer, of the reader, and now of the thinker mulling over a given metaphor, meaning can be made complete upon the centering of those unities combined by the relation, contrast, or comparison of the components that construct them. Those constructed unities at center stage are reader, writer, and metaphor. Therefore, knowledge and meaning remain abstract and speculative as long as the components of their construction remain separate and distinct, untested by practical use, to paraphrase Kant. But once the condition of their unity is conjoined by the components of a reader’s, a writer’s, or a metaphor’s construction, knowledge and meaning are completed, not unlike the Sufi mystic who declares, “I am the child whose father is his son, and the wine whose vine is its jar” (Richards 95). The subject,
therefore, is complete at the juncture of these components’ crossings, but the moment is fleeting; as we shall see over the course of this essay, there is but a momentary completion.

In the shadows of the postmodern classroom, various subjectivities existing within the Composition, Rhetoric, and Literature classrooms become at once suspicious, at least in their quest for dominance or centering. As Bizzel explains, “knowledge, values, and individual subjectivities emerge endlessly from an interplay of social, cultural, and historical forces.” That we have been “shaped by the ways of the people around (us who) have taught (us) to react to (our) experience” (284), establishes a centering among other centers, an endless parade of centers effectively moving out toward the margins. In this scenario, one element is missing, nevertheless. As Faigley argues, postmodern theory “does not supply a theory of agency (20). As argued by Paul Smith, “the human agent exceeds the subject as it is constructed in and by much poststructuralist theory as well as by those discourses against which poststructuralist theory claims to pose itself (xxx). In other words, the subject is at the center of a “contradictory complex of subject formations that makes for negotiation among different positions,” but at this center of negotiation, a dialectic is achieved that accounts for the possibility of change—historical, political, and social—that neither frees the subject, but also never renders the subject useless and helpless at the end of the nihilistic highway leading to nothing and nowhere (Berlin, Poetics, Rhetorics 73-74). In this position is where we find the freshman student of composition, negotiating agency among the ubiquitous influences of popular culture,
Recipe for Success?

home, friends, parents, and now the university, with its demands to conform to the “academic discourse community” utilizing a procedure for writing called the writing process. But how can a student remain centered within this process if the experts can’t even agree to the methods it prescribes or to the results it achieves?

Regarding the variable writing processes, many questions are often asked about how their process originates or how a solution addressing a problem or an issue is solved. At its most basic level, questions such as, “What precipitates writing?” are asked, but immediately that could be followed with, “How does the writer identify the inherent elements toward a solution?” and “Is that solution gained through some internal retrieval, such as memory, or from an external source, for instance, a social, cultural, or political environment?” To complicate the inquiry further, any specter of certainty from a given answer is quickly deflated by asking, “If gained from an external source, how is a solution deduced through the layers of rhetoric that promulgate its dominance as truth? (Reither 286-287). From all these questions, we can infer that the writing process is not a one-way highway toward meaning and understanding, but a road fraught with pot-holes, turns, by-ways, detours, and switchbacks from which we return and stop, then start again. In addition, no single road exists; in other words, there is not one process that can lay claim to an overarching success for all; rather the writing process is a complex network of tributaries traveled and traversed at random with no commonly defined linear sequence or destination (Bizzel 196). At risk of being redundant, it is safe to say the act of writing shares only
one commonality, that of being argued—in terms of method or philosophy—in multiple, seemingly infinite, ways.

For example, Lee Odell, in his CCCC lecture, “Reading and Writing in the Workplace” (1984), says that “writing and inquiry are socially collaborative” processes that utilize “invention, discovery, and inquiry” in a way that cannot be separated from the “institutional relationships and strategies” that inspire them (Reither 287).

Further, Patricia Bizzel argues that the study of the writing process and inquiry are divided into two camps: 1) Those that posit language structure at writing’s and inquiries’ vital core, originating in the early stages of childhood that precede any social interaction and 2) those that privilege the idea that “the social processes” influence the learning of language and the capability to think (Reither 287).

Bizzel goes on to argue how the difficulty in writing (for students) stems from their unfamiliarity with the demands of “academic discourse conventions” (Reither 287). Thus she seems to be saying that once the “academic discourse conventions” are practiced and learned, the fundamental stages of the writing process will flower and bloom as knowledge sprouted from a extant seed that suddenly has been watered and nurtured by the toil and labor of academic discourse pedagogy.

Given their inclinations to agree that writing exists as a process in Composition Studies, one that originates in the “impulse to put words to paper,” both Bizzel and Odell, according to Reither, limit the writing process as merely cognitive—as a knowledge locked away in the prison depths of a young mind like an
Recipe for Success?

angry prisoner demanding freedom—whereas Reither sees it influenced by the social conditions and the rhetorical motives that “create and constitute its own contexts” (287). Although Reither’s assessment of Bizzel’s “cognitive” approach implies a formula that on the surface appears prescriptive and directive, as we shall discover later in her academic discourse methodology, this approach is necessary yet flexible enough that it works to engage a writer’s empowerment. Nevertheless, Reither’s evaluations of the writing process as socially and rhetorically influenced are correct and, despite his contention, dovetail directly with Bizzel’s approach (“writing is situated in the language-using community...in turn shaped by...social, cultural, and political circumstances [Bizzel 198]). To both authors’ observations, however, a writer’s own ideological assumptions must be included as presupposing the whole process, while remaining malleable enough for further scrutiny and subsequent amendment. In other words, the writing process is a discovery of orders of meaning, self-reflexive, self critical, contingent to historical modification, open to change, and flexible in its resolve (Berlin Rhetoric, Poetics 87-88).

It goes without saying that the contentious dialogue surrounding writing is not limited to the issues stated above. As this paper has attempted to assert, and will continue to assert, and as Reither, Berlin, and Faigley have also theorized, the writing argument (and writing itself) far exceeds the boundaries of isolated praxis; rather, incorporated into this dialectic is constant discourse that involves other academic disciplines (e.g., Sociology, Cultural Studies, Psychology, to name a few) in the web of the cultural, political, economic, and social landscapes.
Recipe for Success?

One of the more intriguing studies that can apply to the practice of writing and the subjectivity that produces it, exist in the field of psychoanalysis. Although he insists on concrete utterance—the word, the play of the spoken signifier—, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) situates a reader reading a text as a patient, while the text itself is the analyst (Skura 365). Using the Freudian concept of transference in which the patient replaces a pivotal person in his life with that of the analyst, a reader’s transference is completed through the text by his act of interpretation (Skura 366), which for Jane Gallop produces within the reader a presumption of symptomatic effects that the text in place becomes the locus “where meaning and knowledge of meaning reside” (Gallop 26-30). Likewise, in a writer, these subjective interpretations (accomplished by the writer’s research) engendered by multifarious influences (social, cultural, etc.) that drive the writing process produce a similar, but tenuous dependence. Tenuous because the language used by the writer (or by anybody else) defines a subject who exists in mutual opposition within an “I-thou dialectic,” which Lacan cites as a debilitating force, not unlike the social and cultural mandates that impose laws and prohibitions as originating in language that unwittingly fashion and mold the subject. The subject, in Lacan’s analysis, therefore, desires wholeness and unity, but is thwarted by these mutual oppositions that renders such thoughts as “logical impossibilities” (Sarup 8, 14).

By contrast, Kenneth Burke would suggest that a “grammar of motives” exists—both in writing and in speech—that underscores not meaning, knowledge, or truth, but motive, from which the interaction between writers and readers, speakers
and listeners, become intentional and entirely rhetorical. While both Burke’s and Lacan’s hypotheses center a form of subjectivity based on motivation or desire, as expressed and formulated through language, Burke, unlike Lacan, does not denigrate language’s power to construct meaning. Rather, Burke extends the possibility of human unity through the use of language as symbolic action and rhetoric as symbolic inducement (Herrick 222-227).

* 

In the academy today, as the distinction between Composition Studies, Rhetoric, and Literature are argued and “class distinctions continue to circumscribe the institutional relations” surrounding these disciplines (McQuade 494), one analogous feature among them all is that they share the teaching, interpretation, motivation, or practical application of the reading and writing processes as it relates to the subject. The components of metaphor also unite these disciplines—isolated from each other by ideology and function—through an “analogical extension” of ideas, for example, that are juxtaposed by their incongruities to form a “new usable device,” whose optimal function exceeds the sum of its ideas—that of pedagogical excellence (Burke, Permanence and Change 90, 96). In turn, the reading and writing processes and the application of metaphor become the catalyst for the distillation of the knowledge and meaning that each discipline shares. They unify all three when both teacher and student, in their respective capacities, learn to recognize their functions as indistinguishably part of each curriculum. The writing and reading processes and the tools of the master tropes, especially metaphor, also serve to define
an elusive centering of self, although that centering is lost once the juncture at which they are conjoined gets lost in language, pluralism, postmodernity, conflicting social mores, and conflicting paradigms. As a result, all that’s left is a subject’s agency, the means by which the postmodern subject can be empowered.

In the exploration of the self and his agency, this paper will investigate the evolution of Composition Studies from a discipline that once taught writing by “formulaic” and “mechanical” means, to one that has employed “the social-epistemic”—a recent development of rhetoric that studies and critiques the “signifying practices in their relation to subject formation within the framework of economic, social, and political conditions” (Berlin Rhetoric, Poetics 83). The methodology of social epistemic rhetoric is primarily the convergence of subject as agent with “poststructuralist speculation, (which produces) a mutually enriching effort” (Berlin Rhetoric, Poetics 87). Configured alongside this poststructuralist speculation will be an examination not only of the commonalities that identify the primary objectives of a College English Department, but a critique of the divisive practices and debilitating attitudes that compel Literature Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition Studies into competition with each other, destroying the means and methodologies for a unified approach that would otherwise serve to empower a student. Using Lacanian psychoanalysis in comparison and contrast with Burke’s study of rhetoric, this paper will also qualify the interdependence that exists between the three disciplines that would render this unnecessary competition null and void, if applied within a systematic and unified praxis and guided by complementary theories.
In conjunction, and simultaneous, with the Lacanian/Burkeian contrasts and comparisons, practical applications of literature (using “Uqbar, Tlon, and Tertius Orbis” by Jorge Luis Borges and “The Purloined Letter” by Edgar Allan Poe) and metaphor (using my distillery apparatus model, among others) will implicate this competition and illustrate a shared interdependence existing among each discipline. Throughout this study, the student will remain the central focus as the victor or the victim of these departmental confrontations, while utilizing Bizzel’s and Berlin’s inquiries into Composition Studies, among other inquiries. Despite the prevailing postmodern attitudes of the day, agency within the student is possible. This possibility remains viable as long as teachers and students connect the use of metaphor and the reading and writing processes to each source of study within each discipline that emphasizes the practical application of the learned body of knowledge through educated yet self-enriching interpretations of texts and powerful yet flexible methodologies of writing—all initiated by honest, sincere, and responsible pedagogical motivations.
Chapter II—Fermentation: A History of Rhetoric and Composition

Since its onset in the days of ancient Greece, rhetoric flourished under a controlled schizophrenia. In the Platonic dialogues, *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*, rhetoric subsisted in this affliction that designated its practice as either technique or art, depending on which text one read. Even in *Gorgias* this duality exists within a single text. When he's not bashing rhetoric as detrimental to society or being highly critical of the Sophistic rants that resort to mere self-preservation at the expense of the state, the Plato of *Gorgias*, nevertheless establishes the *techne* of rhetoric as “useful for bringing about justice and harmony” in a given society; but as an art, Plato also acknowledges rhetoric’s virtue when it is “joined to a love of wisdom and a true knowledge of justice” (Herrick, 64-69).

To Plato, this artistic component of persuasive rhetoric is brought to light by an explanation of the human soul. Using the metaphor of a chariot and charioteer—the human soul as the tenor, the charioteer as the vehicle—Plato, through Socrates, distinguishes the soul as comprised of three parts. The wisdom-loving entity is the first, the philosopher’s soul, the charioteer who drives his chariot pulled by two horses, the subdued, easily restrained lover of nobility and the raucous, hard to control lover of honor—the second and third parts of the soul, respectively, that typifies the ubiquitous duality mentioned above. The mastery of both horses, honor and nobility, however, establishes order in the soul that recognizes truth. Therefore, to the owner of this soul, an expressed rhetoric is artfully weighed, its validity and verity determined by the insight such mastery produces (Herrick, 64-69).
In *Phaedrus*, such duality is less pronounced. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg go so far as to suggest that as an artful device Plato’s “rhetoric is a means of ‘attaining truth’” (Herrick 64-68). This means of “attaining truth” is recognized by Bizzell and Herzberg in two ways. First, within rhetoric’s capacity these means are achieved, not necessarily through a process of discovery, but through the propagation of the truth “existing independently of an audience.” Secondly, Plato sees the attainment of truth through the understanding achieved in a conversation (Herrick, 64-69). This insight regarding truth attainment is echoed by Berlin, but the praxis and application of this philosophy involves a literary movement not usually associated with the development of rhetoric—Transcendentalism (*Writing Instruction* 10).

Before trampling over that vertiginous verdure, however, the influence of Aristotle, and the classical sensibility he lends that continues to inform rhetoric to the present day cannot be denied.

Aristotle, like Plato, started his career critical of rhetoric, but in his treatise, *Rhetoric*, when he states that “rhetoric is the faculty of observing in any case the available means of persuasion,” he raises rhetoric from mere practical appeal to “inventional considerations.” To Aristotle, since rhetoric possesses these creative faculties that appeal to a speaker and his audience in the rational, ethical, and emotional senses, it becomes a useful art. Gone, therefore, is the Platonic duality that simultaneously undermined and elevated rhetoric; but as in all art, its outcome cannot be guaranteed. Only a Sophist, according to Aristotle, would mandate a such a guarantee. He reasoned that since Sophist teaching methods promoted memorization
of influential speeches for the sole purpose of imitating their inherently persuasive techniques, the purpose of a speech, therefore, involved captivating an audience, regardless of the truthfulness of the speech’s content. Like medicine, which cannot guarantee good health, the success of rhetoric does not lie solely in its guarantee of persuasive ability, but in the discovery of its means by which success (or the inability to achieve this success) is measured (Herrick 73-77). This success, or lack of, is determined by the proper (or improper) uses and applications of rhetoric at play in the fields of discovery. Aristotle lists four of them.

As an art, then, rhetoric’s utility is bolstered by Aristotle’s claim that no matter what, truth will prevail. The knowledge of rhetoric assures us of this fact, according to Aristotle, but it is the speaker who may not always convince us. Consequently, as each speaker in a public debate bandies about ideas and notions of truth, if the truth does not become self-evident (as an appeal directed solely to the emotions would), it is the knowledgeable rhetorician who applies the learning gained in his systematic study of persuasion, through search and discovery, that asserts the truth (Herrick 77).

Secondly, usefulness is also determined by a confrontation of the masses (voicing popular appeals) and a speaker of artful rhetoric. Since it is the nature of some audiences that renders persuasion futile, a rhetorician’s ability to draw connections between the audience’s (wrongful) beliefs and his (the speaker’s) argued points adapts the means by which the case can be argued more convincingly next time. Therefore, failure to reach an audience proves to be a means by which success
Fermentation

can be achieved subsequently, which is what Herrick calls "the most important
dimension of audience adaptation" (77).

Utilizing this same "in-betweeness," the speaker also strives to think both
sides of a question in a debate, where weighing the pros and cons not only inform the
speaker of the "available means of persuasion," but it could also refute the case of the
opposition. This use of argument, this thinking both sides of a question, "tests ideas,
advocates points of view, and discovers the relevance of certain facts and truths"
(Herrick 78).

In the last practical use of rhetoric that Aristotle proposed—self-defense—his
proposition borders on Sophist-like territory, which on the surface appears almost
non-Aristotelian. Instead of defending oneself in order to preserve self-image and
possessions, however, Aristotle justifies the use of self-defense by advocating "the
use of rational speech (as) more distinctive of a human being than the use of his
limbs" (Herrick 78). Thus, "the ability to defend oneself with speech and reason,"
devoid of emotional and deceitful appeals with "injustice as its outcome," the speaker
is able to maintain control of an audience.

Despite the means of discovering these uses of rhetoric "as a practical art" that
promoted a "critical examination on which judgment (political and otherwise) was to
be rendered" (Herrick 78), rhetoric in Aristotle's day nevertheless operated in a
closed world, where the Universe was governed by the finite rules of reason, as was
the human mind. And although the areas of less certainty and less probability were
the realm of rhetoric, the "inventional considerations" produced by the search for the
“available means of persuasion” (through rational, ethical, and emotional appeals) that advanced rhetoric to the ranks of art prove different from the invention we know of today (Berlin, Writing Instruction 5).

Since the Aristotelian rhetoric is deductive—operating through syllogisms that move from a known premise, and through an application of that premise, resulting in a conclusion—that provides new methods of persuasion but fails to arrive at a new vista of truth, invention is limited to what is already known or to what exists in a high level of scientific probability (Herrick 78, Berlin, Writing Instruction 5). Therefore, the apparent conservatism of rhetoric under Aristotle’s mode of deductive reasoning—given its designation as an oral discourse and its presentation to small, selected audiences of the ruling elite—never challenges the city/state’s power vacuum or its established body of knowledge (Berlin, Writing Instruction 5).

Furthering this conservatism in knowledge acquisition is Aristotle’s notion of language as a finite sign system, where thought and word persist in distinctly separate existences from each other. This uneasy relation between signified and signifier bears a post-structuralist sensibility. But that similarity ends when the signifier (the word) is designated as a rational truth in the Aristotelian noetic fields where conceptions of reality, human nature, and language are quantified in a finite sense, and the means to express those conceptions are not only separate, but in service of those rational truths when brought together for the express purpose of communication (Berlin, Writing Instruction 6).
Classical rhetoric persisted for nearly twenty-three centuries in England, and for a limited time in the United States until the beginning of the 19th century. The finite noetic fields of Aristotle were finally being challenged, but in America so was everything English. Therefore the embrace of a new rhetoric in England remained strictly philosophical. In America, however, with the advent of the Scottish Common Sense Realism it embraced, the change in America also became reactionary, an act that would foreshadow not only a cultural influence on rhetoric, but the political as well (Berlin, Writing Instruction 6).

This politicization in America, however, was represented by the strangle-hold Protestantism had on 19th century America, and how the new Common Sense Realism (CSR) gingerly avoided trampling underfoot its various denominations’ tendrils of competing doctrines. In addition, the continued growth and reliance of capitalism necessitated CSR’s acceptance and concession toward the pursuits of money-making. The new rhetoric became a safe haven of compromise for these seemingly contradictory entities, while clothing itself in new attire. By serving Mammon in addition to serving God, however, CSR proponents tore a dualistic divide along the seam of rhetoric’s purpose. By employing empirical means (i.e., “replicat(ing) vividly and specifically the sensory experience of the material world,” while de-emphasizing invention) to explain the merits of a free market economy and to impose its conservative epistemology, the new rhetoric’s reliance on recording experience in concrete terms became propagandistic, surrendering its potentially creative voice to its new masters as it lounged about in the finest silks. The process of communication,
therefore, became a matching game of sign conjoined to idea, and reality, a mere transcription of sense data through observation. Whereas Aristotle privileged the signifier as truth in a finite field, CSRs viewed truth as extralingual, existing apart from the arbitrary signs, but wholly grounded in the observer’s vivid transcription and his ability to persuade an audience of the verity of his observations. In this scenario of accommodating both religion and commerce through specific and concrete utterance of experience, and of conjoining sign and idea as a means of inductive truth-seeking, language for the Common Sense Realists was subjugated to an existence as a trendy window dresser; its effect on an audience, in turn, a result of choosing proper stylistic concerns that mirrored, without deviation, the political and cultural fashion sensibilities of the day (Berlin, *Writing Instruction* 7-9, 19-34).

Despite its insistence on playing it safe, perhaps, moreover, *because* of this insistence, the tenets of Common Sense Realism survived well into twentieth century college classrooms in the guise of the Current-Traditional Rhetoric. In the cultural and political hegemony it imposed since gaining its foothold on American pedagogies, circa 1835, the tenets of Common Sense Realism also diminished literature’s role to “support(ing) the existing social and economic arrangement” and to providing a bully pulpit for the dominant religious mores (Berlin, *Writing Instruction* 33). Some of the residual holdover of CSR’s principles still existing today are evidenced in the modern classroom. For example, some teachers devote more time to the instruction of form over content, as they methodically correct grammar and mechanics, while stipulating that “since meaning is directly apprehensible
through the senses, content presents no problems (to the student) (because) one may just look about at many examples and write” (Hillocks 111)—which sums up the philosophy and the result of Common Sense Realism’s praxis for our purposes quite sufficiently.

By contrast, Romantic rhetoric, which enlarged the once-finite noetic fields by employing an analogical method (a method occurring in the use of metaphor) that “found a way of expressing through language what itself transcends language” (Berlin, Writing Instruction 11), revolutionized CSR’s reliance on form (and style) to one that emphasized content generated in the composing process, and placed this “act of writing and speaking at the center of knowing” (Berlin, Writing Instruction 10).

Due to the conservative and self-sustaining environment that dictated the 19th century American college curriculum, however, Romantic rhetoric failed to gain ground. Its emphasis on an organic truth sprouting from an interdependent relation between language, speaker, listener, and reality, and the inventive capacity resulting from the interaction between the observer and the observed, threatened the status quo adherents’ conception of a fixed truth, which they designed for gaining knowledge only by those who were trained in the use of their proper faculties. Learning to use these proper faculties, therefore, was limited to those students whose future professions (e.g., clergy, lawyers, and civic leaders) was designed to support the theocratic “democracy” from which they came. Romantic rhetoric, in turn, broke the constraints of knowledge-gathering to include all perceivers of the known and the unknown. Alluding to the positions taken in the works by I. A. Richards and Kenneth
Burke, Berlin privileges Romantic rhetoric’s democratic principles when he suggests, “one does not have to be a philosophical idealist to see reality as the convergence of perceiver and perceived with language as the agent of mediation” (Berlin, Writing Instruction 57).

Rhetoric, communicated in either its oral or written permutation, is a social act, a means by which meaning is conveyed to groups of people or individuals. Romantic rhetoric—with its sole insistence on the improvement of the individual, as some critics have ascertained—suffers under the delusion of those who persist in this viewpoint as being anti-rhetorical. While Berlin delineates two contrary views of Ralph Waldo Emerson—that of a “romantic individualist” and that of a “rhetorician at the center of political and social action,” it is the latter he privileges (Berlin, Writing Instruction 43). The same, however, can be said for Henry David Thoreau. In his seminal work Walden, in the introductory chapter “Economy,” Thoreau attempts to waylay these disparate perceptions, where the Transcendentalist’s rhetoric is one of social revolt, from which he “champions a metaphysics of difference” by using what was later called carnival rhetoric (by M. M. Bakhtin) that mocks convention through words and phrases, presenting ideologies counter to society’s own. But is Thoreau championing this “metaphysics of difference” as a social critic—whose interest lies in transforming language, and as such the world—or as a poet—as Schueller claims—who asserts his “single, authoritative ‘I’” (Scheuller 33), decrying society in his own unique voice howling from within the concrete wilderness?
The answer to that question is best described by Berlin’s quote of F. O. Matthiessen’s response to this same issue concerning the Emerson social instigator/romantic individualist dichotomy, but its assertion can also be applied to Thoreau:

In declaring that the best prose becomes poetic, that the sublimest speech is a poem, Emerson was voicing the special desire of the Transcendentalists to break through all restricting divisions. But in his tendency to link poets and orators whenever he listed the various acts, he was responding to a more common and widespread belief of his time (Writing Instruction 43).

In other words, Emerson views the orator as synonymous to the poet, whose beliefs and various discourses address the strengths and weaknesses of society, yet the Romantic orator/poet’s voice, in its critique of society, is not designed to “institutionalize a counter-ideology,” as Schueller claims it does in Walden (45). The true poet’s voice is not ephemeral or strictly epochal, although its intention may be socially minded. Rather, the poet/orator’s voice and subsequent message is contextual, its meaning dependent on a given sociological, political, or situational context. Furthermore, context, in this regard, is a configuration by the reader, and significance is appropriated by the legitimacy of the poet’s/orator’s voice to transcend his or her own era.

Although Schueller acknowledges Thoreau’s belief in the various interpretations of human life and meaning, she nevertheless argues the incapacity of
his readers to question, parody, or provide alternatives to existing socio-ideological languages (thereby Thoreau, in her view, sets himself up as a language iconoclast) (45). This view, however, runs counter to the accepted Transcendentalist viewpoint that privileges a Kantian intuition of categories of preexisting knowledge in light of the belief that God, humankind, and nature all derive from a similar source. Accordingly, all of us share in this intuition. Given the incidence of this shared intuition and our synonymous origins, then we as inhabitants of this world become "microcosms of the macrocosmic divinity," in much the same way Thoreau's portrayal of Walden Pond is an examination of society in the shadow of nature in comparison with "the larger pattern of God's designs" (Meyerson xxix). Since we all share in this divinity, according to Emerson, epistemology resides in the interdependent relation between the senses (that the ideal makes manifest) and the ideal (that sense data describe); knowledge-seeking, in turn, is a constant dialectic. The key to this epistemology is located in language (Berlin, Writing Instruction 46). Therefore, because of this constant dialectic between perceiver and the perceived, and as language evolves over the course of time or bends to the needs of a societal or political situation at the crossroads between the two, the likelihood of an "institutionalized counter-ideology" that existed in a previous era— which Schueller theorizes as Thoreau's purpose for writing Walden— would most likely be considered obsolete in a later era. Yet, when considering both Thoreau's and Emerson's writing today, the inverse is actually true. The availability of their work remains ubiquitous in American society. Their messages remain contextually
relevant, as evidenced by their philosophical, rhetorical, and sociological influences on modern society and the continued availability of college courses devoted to their study, thereby overcoming the stigma of an "institutionalized counter-ideology" that has lost every shred of its former significance.

Defining the Romantic rhetoric as a social phenomenon, rather than as an individual pursuit, and as a vital force in English Studies in the academy today nevertheless hardly does justice to its relevance. As mentioned previously, Romantic rhetoric places the composing process at the center of knowledge. Since the material world (matter) is conjoined with the ideal that informs it, reality, as the product of these two, is the thoughtful negotiation of interpretation of an observer's insight (Berlin 10). Therefore, the creative act—invention—is brought to the forefront. No longer is invention reduced to conformance among the fixed domains of finite knowledge as in Plato's and Aristotle's days, or is it straight-jacketed into compliance with the linguistic fashion of the day, as it was with Scottish Common Sense Realists. In the process of this creation, the writer (or speaker) utilizes all his faculties (spiritual, corporeal, rational, moral, aesthetic) as a fully functional human being (not as a Christian, an American, a scientist, or even as an artist). Fully cognizant of a realm existing beyond his own sensory perception, the writer then comprehends reality as his own construct, where his sense data and the ideal have conjoined with the advent of his experience. Yet this conception gives rise to language as a mediating force. Using analogical comparisons to assure an expression beyond what mere words in isolation could never explain, the writer employs metaphor to "express the unity of
the ideal and the material, suggesting realms of being that are beyond the counters of
physical existence” (Berlin, Writing Instruction 10-11). Metaphor, however, is not
limited to the “dreams of a few poets,” as Plato would argue. In Romantic rhetoric,
metaphor becomes normative, “the paradigm for language use.” Therefore, the writer,
located between his perceived sense data and his perceptions of the ideal, becomes
the center (albeit temporary) in his study of comparisons, and from there he deduces
idea and matter, spirit and nature, subject and object, Nature and Man in the
constitution of his reality, united by inexplicable metaphor (Berlin, Writing
Instruction 10-53).

Not only do the Romantics free rhetoric from its stodgy conventions, they also
foreshadow future advancements in knowledge by anticipating modern epistemology
through their perceiver/perceived conception of reality. But the highway to
respectability for the Romantics was fraught with many detours along the way before
many of its precepts were adopted by the social-epistemic rhetoric in the 1970s.

One of those detours occurred during the 1870s and the 1880s. Proclaiming a
“supreme Anglo-Saxon virtue,” as decreed by 19th century English historian Sharon
Turner in her History of Anglo-Saxons (1799-1805), Americans, restructuring its
identity in the midst of Civil War Reconstruction and exercising its self-sustaining
notion of “inherent excellence” against the recent influx of Irish immigrants, returned
to its English origins. Two threats to this newly-adopted attitude of exclusionist
Anglo heritage were seen as related to the Irish: their religion, Catholicism, and their
ideologies, known as “political radicalism.” As these threats intensified, especially in
light of the series of fiscal depressions that wracked the nation in every decade
between 1870 and 1900, a “patrician nationalism” was born among Anglophiles.
Although the hostility directed at all immigrants was largely for economic reasons,
the divide between the Anglos and the immigrants deepened, exacerbated by Anglo
claims of ethnic superiority (as upheld by the results of questionable “scientific
studies”). As these battles intensified, the university English departments also waged
their own war in its proclamation of a Anglo-Saxon literary canon and in its
establishment of Anglo-Saxon studies that supplanted Greek and Latin, stealing
pedagogical thunder away from and reliance upon the classic rhetorical tradition
(Berlin, Rhetorics, Poetics 26-29).

Within this social, political, and economic context, three major paradigms of a
“poetic-rhetoric binary” rose in competition with the other in the English departments
throughout the American academy. As Berlin iterates, the role of rhetoric and poetics
give “significance to the other through a division of textual labor,” yet this
significance was largely ignored as the three paradigms were developed in
competition with the other. While each paradigm offered theories of both literary
interpretation (poetics) and textual production (rhetoric), the theories remained
distinct and disjunctive, disregarding the common ground that characterized each
discipline’s interdependence on the other (Rhetorics, Poetics 29). Once again, the
crack in the foundation of rhetoric’s stated purpose had been blown wide open. As
experienced in Plato’s disparate views on rhetoric (Phaedrus versus Gorgias) and as
experienced in the Common Sense Realists’ indecisive stance on whom it should
serve (God or Mammon), late 19th century rhetoric, in the throes of this debilitating binary relationship, became, once again, the hapless patient suffering from a controlled schizophrenia that the Romantics had temporarily cured.

The first paradigm, or “conception of literacy,” resuscitated the old Scottish Common Sense Realism, later to be christened in the twentieth century under a new moniker, Current-Traditional Rhetoric. Berlin calls this paradigm, “Literacy for the Scientific Meritocracy.” Eschewing any consideration of chance or probability, its epistemology is garnered through scientific method. Likewise, invention is lost in the process of teaching a student in the methods of textual arrangement in conjunction with conforming his text to the “highest standards of grammar and usage.” In this straight-jacketed approach to teaching, the four modes of discourse (narration, description, exposition, and argument) are discovered as responses to the various mental faculties. The weakness of this approach, however, becomes the class, race, and gender biases that are appropriated from its scientific claims to objective truth (Berlin, Rhetorics, Poetics 30-33).

The second paradigm, the “Literacy of Liberal Culture,” would fare better today in praxis in the classroom, since it emphasizes individual empowerment in much the same way Romantic rhetoric does, but as Berlin admits, it does so “without (Emerson’s) commitment to democracy.” This lack of commitment to democracy is seen in the texts the movement values, those of Hiram Corson, Brander Matthews, and George Woodberry, who largely corroborate with the class of old New England
patriarchs firmly entrenched in their allegiance to the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 33-35).

The third paradigm, Democratic Literacy, "proposes a rhetoric that emphasizes service to the community and ethical commitment to the public good," but, as Berlin maintains, this commitment to the public good is blindsided by its insistence that the public is good, and always will remain good, and that the democratic process will prevail over economic uncertainty and the political fallout that such uncertainty creates (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 35-38).

As Berlin insists, these shifts in paradigm were created to serve "larger economic, social, and political objectives" (*Rhetorics, Poetics* 28), yet the resulting effect of this division failed to unify "the educational experience of students." (*Rhetorics, Poetics* 38). Students entering Harvard, for example, and other schools that stressed a curriculum of choice under an elective system, became empowered by the choices they had to make, but the learning within the paradigm of Scientific Meritocracy, which schools of Harvard's ilk subscribed to, merely reflected the elite, patriarchal ideals of old (*Rhetorics, Poetics* 32-33).

Likewise, schools like Yale and Princeton, which recognized the commonality of shared ideas, liberal and humane, nevertheless espoused continuity that rejected most new ideas and stressed longevity as validation for the legitimacy of any concept or institutional practice. While this Liberal Culture paradigm was purported to celebrate "truth, beauty, and goodness ... in a transcendent realm beyond the material," its design remained firmly planted on earthly ground, one that concentrated
power in the select hands “of the gifted and the brilliant few.” If the ultimate designs of the first two paradigms—the Scientific Meritocracy and the Liberal Culture—seem suspiciously familiar, they are. Intent on maintaining their exclusionary power structures, both schools of thought conceded to the others’ authority, and as a result became conceptually indistinguishable as World War I erupted (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 33-35).

The third paradigm, Democratic Literacy, realized its legitimacy in the progressive movement rampant in the Midwest, Penn State, and other colleges. Even though they outwardly rejected the concept of power in the hands of a few (as the other two paradigms unashamedly ascribed to), the adherents to this third paradigm still failed to recognize, for example, a corporation’s undemocratic structure that places a selected few in power over largely unskilled workers, a scenario replicated in 19th century society by a lack of representation not afforded to those barely subsisting among its lower ranks (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 35-38).

As we can deduce, the only unification of “the educational experience of students” by the turn of 20th century appears to be each paradigm’s desire for power. Despite this power struggle and despite the academy’s inability to “provide a stable core of general studies,” the American college curriculum nevertheless met its goal of training a “workforce of...professionals who could enhance the profits of diverse corporate enterprises” (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* 38-39). Replacing this stable core of general studies was an elective system, as adopted by Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University from 1869 to 1909. Therefore, the scope of not only
education in general was diversified from its classical curriculum (English studies, for example, replacing Latin and Greek studies), writing was also diversified, or as Russell, in his Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990, A Curricular History, explains, writing was no longer specialized by class, but by “the unique written conventions of a profession or discipline.” Writing, therefore, could no longer be recognized as a singular skill learned at a young age; rather it became, as Russell continues, “a complex and continuously developing response to the specialized text-based discourse communities, highly embedded in the differentiated practices of those communities” (Spear 319).

In the face of this pervasive lack of unity in the American college curriculum existing at turn of the 20th century, and in light of the rapid assimilation of the new, more diverse and ever-growing student body, paradoxically, the role of composition was designed to train students to a “standard of universal literacy.” But what did that mean? Coming from a classical tradition of teaching students from similarly privileged backgrounds, universal literacy in the bygone eras, and the rigidly narrow methods used to teach it, may have made sense. With its diversified admissions policies in place, however, colleges assumed their newly-matriculated students to possess writing skills at the levels that their former students of perquisite and leisure once had. Consequently, when writing instructors became indoctrinated to their new students’ writing, they quickly found that that wasn’t the case. As Spear explains, “the generalizable elementary skill of correct and well-organized writing” that facilitated the old-school scholars’ seamless entry into “content courses” (“the real
meat of higher education”) had, at once, devolved into remedial skills that henceforth established the lowly and marginal beginning composition course (320). Under these circumstances, Berlin is correct in his assertion, in more ways than one, that “the only genuinely common and unifying experience in the curriculum remained first-year composition” (Rhetorics, Poetics 39), but this unifying characteristic bore a notoriety that hung like a millstone around composition studies’ proverbial neck well into the twentieth century.
Chapter III—The Duality of Inebriation: The Stultification of Rhetoric and Composition Studies and the Possible Negotiation of Self

As previously intimated, rhetoric, from its origins in Plato, has endured a sustained evolution of identity issues, sometimes bordering on a controlled schizophrenia, more often than not demonstrating a fragmented duality. Of the latter characteristic (or affliction), Plato establishes, in *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*, two sides to rhetoric, that of art and *techne*; the only unifying commodity of each being its value or its service to society (Herrick 64). Aristotle, on the other hand, modified rhetoric as a “useful art,” and although its applications of usefulness promoted a critical examination of society, the means of invention produced by the various appeals of persuasion were severely limited to the already known or to the scientifically probable (Herrick 78, Berlin *Writing Instruction* 5).

When Scottish Common Sense Rhetoric gained its foothold on American society and pedagogy, circa 1835, capitalism’s warty hand had secured a firm grasp on societal mores steeped in Protestantism. With an unflinching regard for both—despite the contradiction of capitalism’s thirst for profit at all costs and Protestantism’s obeisance to an inflexible God’s reverential demands—CSR walked both doctrinal avenues. The result of such compromise reduced rhetorical invention in CSR by inductively appealing to experience, which documented its phenomena as it unfolded before the observer’s eye without imaginative insight or even ethical considerations (Berlin *Writing Instruction* 8).

Romantic rhetoric resolved the CSR duality (and the Platonic dualities) by recognizing that reality was no longer the domain of the external world, thereby
freeing itself from the bonds of both religion and capitalism. The composing process, instead, became the center of knowing. Since signs that constituted language were arbitrary, the use of analogical methods like metaphor transcended language itself and expressed a unity between the ideal and the material (Berlin *Writing Instruction* 10-12). Invention is therefore restored, and the rhetorician—synonymous with the poet at center of society decrying its strengths and weaknesses—is conjoined with listener/reader who discovers legitimacy in the poet’s/rhetorician’s message and contextualizes it far beyond the era that spawned the voice behind the message (Berlin *Writing Instruction* 43).

The failure of romantic rhetoric to catch on in the 19th century, according to Berlin, was two-fold. First, Emerson imposed “a system of thought designed to reconcile philosophical idealism with the demands of democratic society”; he never designed it as systematic pedagogical instruction. Secondly, college education in Emerson’s time was commandeered by the stodgy conservative values of the Protestant clergy—content within the narrow doctrines of the Scottish Common Sense Realists—whose self-serving goals for education required churning out lawyers, civic leaders, and clergymen who espoused the same ideals. Democratic to a fault, Emerson and his Transcendentalist philosophies could have empowered an audience with its emphasis on the composing process and the importance given to subjective truth-seeking, but subscribers to the status quo thought better to resist. As Frederick Rudolph is quoted from his *The American College and University: A History* (1962), denouncing such self-preserving attitudes of inclusion, “the
choice...was between adopting a course of study that appealed to all classes or adhering to a course that appealed to one class.” The latter choice, decided upon by most American colleges, as Berlin says, wasn’t national or unanimous, but the elitist implications were obvious (55-57).

As the offspring of the Scottish Common Sense Realist rhetoric, Current-traditional, has managed to survive well into the 20th century, despite its positivistic stance and its reliance on a scientific method of attaining truth by inductive reasoning. Of course, many would say it is precisely because of this method that, even today, many English teachers and college instructors still commit themselves to some variation of it. In the CSR mode, the mental faculties of the human animal (i.e., emotion, will, understanding, reason, and the imagination) were confirmed by persuasion, the exalted mainstay of oratory. These faculties, however, functionally distinct from each other, remained dependent upon sensory experience to mechanically formulate them. The use of sensory experience to formulate each of the faculties eventually fathered the four forms of discourse: narration, description, exposition, and persuasion. But a further narrowing of the faculty fields eventually forced the Current-traditional rhetoric to partly diverge from its patriarchal roots in the Common Sense Rhetoric. By removing the faculty of human emotion from any consideration of truth- or knowledge-seeking that experience molds, Current-traditional Rhetoric was left with the twin siblings of rational understanding and cold reason at its doorstep with which to argue truth (Spear 321, Hillocks 110-111, Berlin Writing Instruction 62-63).
The Duality of Inebriation

With its depleted arsenal, the Current-traditional Rhetoric that evolved into the 20th century could now rely solely on expository argumentation for a) establishing objectified truths and b) for attacking wrongful positions that counter that truth. Tracing this devolution back to the 1890s, the Composition classroom, with this narrow means of exposition having become its sole pedagogical objective, the Current-traditional Rhetoric’s first victim in a war against subjective negotiation for truth became invention. Without invention, the weapons of choice for the men in that Expository Army of yore gleamed mightily, but their sword edges proved dull upon impact. Close observation in the scientific sense, the use of research materials and empirical data, and the literary works of others to serve as rigid models for emulation became these weapons of choice, leaving only a scant residue of invention’s former self, as once practiced by Emerson and his Romantic Warriors (Berlin Writing Instruction 67-68).

Nevertheless, right before the turn of the century, the attrition within the Composition classroom and the relegation of invention was thought to have been rescued by a savior—a savior called “the managerial scheme of invention.” In this scheme, the paragraph became central. Paragraphic unity, achievable only through verbal coherence and emphasis of the topic within a paragraph’s construction supposedly enlightened a student if he or she ensured that:

- Each sentence (was) related to that which preceded it;
- Parallel thought… employ(ed) parallel structure;
- The first sentence of a paragraph indicate(d) the subject;
- Each sentence (was) appropriately
situated in the paragraph; The paragraph...displayed unity; and The principal and subordinate parts (were) appropriately arranged (Berlin Writing Instruction 67-68).

In the end, the savior proved to be a false prophet because such directive measures reeked solely of stylistic concerns, not invention.

As the 20th century dawned, the Composition classroom, having suffered the devolution of invention, the narrowing use of mental faculties to those of understanding and reason, the reliance of expository argumentation, and emphasis of style over imagination—all to accommodate the stifling, totalitarian regime of the Current-traditional Rhetoric—lost its once-noble purpose of constructing thinking individuals to one of producing students of a singular, conformist mindset. Composition teachers lost their prestige as well, since their limited curricula was limited to teaching rudimentary subject matter that rarely extended beyond verifiable content or proper language use and grammar and mechanics. Persuasion, which employed the mental faculties of emotion, was also missing in action in the Composition classroom, since it was considered applicable only to oratory by such Current-traditional catalysts like John Franklin Genung of Amherst, who insisted it necessitated “the speaker at close quarters with his audience.” Literature courses as a result gained the lion’s share of attention in the English department for its forays into the imaginative worlds of creativity, realms now seemingly lost to Composition (Berlin Writing Instruction 67-75). Not until over sixty years later did this environment begin to transform from its old, stodgy and elitist ways.
By the 1970s, although change occurred, it was a change exacerbated by the need of Composition studies to validate itself and to maintain its viability in what became known as the postmodern era. To paraphrase and slightly modify Jameson’s theory of the fragmented, decentered self—a direct result of postmodernism’s ubiquitous imagery vying for attention—, composition studies (if considered as a subject—or self) recognized the need to provide a “cognitive mapping” of its experience in the global economy in order to overcome the neutrality that inhibits ability to react to events brought on by the barrage of images (Bertens 186, Faigley 13). Cognitive mapping, or the mental representation of self, suggested a need for composition studies to expand its horizons beyond teaching verifiable content and tyrannically demanding grammatical and mechanical correctness. This expansion occurred in many ways. For example, the Writing across the Curriculum movement suggested ways of “helping faculty...make use of writing to promote learning” across the disciplines. Initially concentrating on journal writing and in-class transcription, the WAC movement then progressed to a more formalized writing instruction. Soon the program met with resistance, however, from instructors who taught subjects other than English, and cries of being “co-opted by the English Department” rose as the curriculum denigrated toward emphasizing remedial skills (Spear 324-325).

A neo-Classical Rhetoric, as espoused by Edward P. J. Corbett, which once again established persuasion at the center of discourse, informed by experience as perceived by the rational, ethical, and aesthetic faculties, found a second wind not
only to heighten the pedagogical vilification surrounding Composition studies, but also to play counterpart to the rampant Current-traditional Rhetoric. Despite the attention paid to free the composing process from the grasp of the Current-traditional, however, it failed catch on in the academic world. Although Corbett supplied a “model of a comprehensive rhetoric (as) a reminder of its rich possibilities,” Michael Halloran, a defender of its power and legitimacy, admits that Classical Rhetoric remains “largely incompatible with modern rhetorical and communication theory” (Berlin, Writing Instruction 86-87).

Composition Studies also used Psychology as a basis for expanding its academic reputation with slightly better results. Both cognitive and expressionistic rhetoric grew out the need for Composition to establish its long-lost validity. In a worse-case scenario, however, as Spear quotes Berlin, they remain exercises of individuals who assert their privatized visions in writing, while eschewing the surrounding social and political implications that could inform them (321).

The end result of all this need for validation and legitimation, which, nevertheless, sets forth compelling but contradictory pedagogies, thus results not in a dualistic divide in Composition studies as once endured, but in a “schizophrenic experience,” to again quote Jameson, “of isolated, discontinuous material signifiers that fail to link up into a coherent sequence” (Faigley 13).

In many ways a coherent sequence is found in the most recently devised rhetoric, the social-epistemic. As an amalgam of older theories, social-epistemic does not represent a paradigm shift, at least to Miller (who recognizes neither of the other
movements of process writing, Cognitive or Expressionistic rhetorics, as paradigm shifts (Miller 106-108), yet it gains its power, as Miller begrudgingly concedes, “as a sustained vision of writing as an independent medium of thought” (116) borne through social interaction, while “stabiliz(ing) a field that originally was a loosely connected field of untheorized practices” (115).

Nevertheless, Miller is quick to point out in her scathing *Textual Carnivals—The Politics of Composition* that movements such as the social-epistemic fail in their pedagogical aims to “confront the social and institutional consequences that a piece of writing may or may not have.” In other words, the movement’s amalgamating characteristics (the combination/culmination of older theories) is largely to blame. Pairing, for example, reform against tradition (social-epistemic against classical rhetoric, for example), Miller cites this intrusion as an imitation of a “logocentric structure that encompasses all of us as participants in cultural hegemony.” Slightly paraphrasing her complaint, she continues: that such an inconceivable act actually works to sustain the root metaphors of a basic structure, a system, or a paradigm, but it also masks what is at stake within that structure (10). Therefore, according to Miller, Composition studies, by thrusting reforms against tradition and by holding “product’s” feet to the fires of “process,” engages in a hapless dance of self-scrutiny before a distorted mirror, fails to engage a solid defense against its critics, and as a result of this criticism, jumps at the first chance it takes to assuage these critics by adopting untested, “maverick” approaches to teaching (10).
Although Miller’s observations of Composition’s manic scramble for success and validity in the past forty to fifty years is well-heeded and informed, such criticism of the process movement as a whole implies a broad brushstroke painted over the wide canvas of variation within the movement. These differences are apparent in light of the developments conspicuous within the social-epistemic, namely its emphasis on social interaction and subject negotiation, fabricated through the various operations of signifying practices—developments that both Faigley and Berlin recognize as “more compatible with postmodern theory” and “informed by poststructuralism” (Faigley 19, Berlin Rhetoric, Poetics 87-88).

In contrast with Miller’s point of view, the social epistemic embraces a best-case-scenario approach to teaching writing that is neither a compromise or a concession to other forms of writing discourse. It does represent a culmination of some of the best aspects of the Classical Rhetoric, for example, by working to effect social change, or to paraphrase Corbett: the rules of persuasion remain the same as in the ancient days because Composition today exists as modern oratory, embracing the distinctive qualities of both writing and oratory (Miller 40). Persuasion, then, has returned to rhetoric, and, in turn, to the Composition classroom because as Berlin argues, rhetoric remains in service to the ideological claims of its orator, and an orator’s foremost objective is to persuade others of his or her ideological claims that can “offer an explicit critique of economic, political, and social arrangements” (“Rhetoric and Ideology” 9, 21). The choice of subject position is a delicate and complex matter, however, with the potential to empower a subject, while serving to
denigrate any Modernist notions of an autonomous self that no longer exists in this environment, in society and in the classroom.

In developing a social construct, psychologist Lev Vygotsky stresses the “social views of process” that conjoin thought and language in the “development of ‘verbal thought,’” a dialectic determined by historical and cultural influences. In turn the negotiated subject is born. Partly taking his cue from Vygotsky’s formulation, Kenneth Bruffee (1983) insists that writing, reading, and the origins of thought are all “social or collaborative acts.” Thought, to Bruffee, is “internalized speech or conversation” and writing, even writing in solitude or writing that evokes solitude, is “internalized conversation re-externalized” (Vipond 11-12). Berlin, citing Stuart Hall, goes a step further stipulating the myriad cultural codes in conflict contending for hegemonic appropriation of the “material conditions of existence” and “consciousness.” With Hall’s placing of the signifying practices that negotiate all subjects and their subject positions at the center stage of political affairs, and by defining the signification of these practices as material forces, the challenge to the existing power structures is enabled. Therefore, the texts produced or interpreted as a result of this signification—a dialectic in constant interaction—are political negotiations, like the subject itself, in context with the current culture, and, arguably, its historic formations (Berlin, Rhetoric, Poetics 87-91). (This difference, that of “historicist orientation,” in addition to Vygotsky’s psychological claim, was also forwarded by Ira Shor in his Critical Teaching and Everyday Life—Berlin, “Rhetoric and Ideology” 19.)
The Duality of Inebriation

Writing or composing, the "internalized conversation re-externalized" mentioned above, is therefore a process of discovery and invention challenging the social, cultural, political, and—as some would contend—historical, conventions that form him or her. "Orders of meaning," discovered in a writer's output has a means of developing the writer's ethos, if that output offers a societal, cultural, political, or even personal heuristic, but this ethos is not easily won (Berlin Rhetorics, Poetics 87). Patricia Bizzel offers a method of developing and maintaining that ethos, thereby establishing agency within the conflicted and fragmented postmodern subject. In what can be perceived, on a superficial level, as contradictory, this ethos is achieved by conforming (yes, conforming!) to the academic discourse conventions (31).

According to Bizzel, the attention lavished on movie stars, sports heroes, politicians, and attention-starved society demimonde denigrates the "extended rational presentation of ideas" in the media. Because the ethos of each of these status-seekers usually represents an artificial construct, a "media image," their means of persuasive ability can be attributed to the components of that image, their clothes, their hair, their make-up, their jewelry, even that infectious smile that wins over the masses. Anything they say in a televised interview, for example, the pre-programmed witticisms, aphorisms, even crude jokes, would more often than not do anything to harm that burnished image. In other words, their image precedes them (31-32).

To students enrolled in a freshman composition course, Bizzel continues, the ubiquitous array of these images does nothing to help with the "skills of elucidation and validation and sequencing in expository writing." In addition, rational debate is
hindered by the self-evident truths expounded by these adored media superstars and, of course, by the handy resolution of potentially complex issues, presented in high-definition, in the half-hour sit-coms and hour-long episodes that star some of these perfectly-coiffed talking heads (32-33).

To combat this deluge of witlessness, Bizzel suggests that we avoid developing a “heuristics” for “inventing arguments of universal appeal” against students’ lack of ability or refusal to engage in fruitful and meaningful argument and dialogue. Instead, a reconsideration of audience is in store, a reconsideration that would offer a contrasting image to their own media experiences as passive spectators. For example, a teacher might suggest to students to develop an analysis of a trade publication’s essay, and then to write their own analytical essay on that article with publication to that particular publisher in mind. Having that imaginary stake (of publication) at their mental forefronts, students may come to understand how active manipulation employs a method of conveying a “body of truths” unique to that trade that resist counter-argument. Using these “truths” as the basis for a system of persuasive deduction that syllogistically forwards an rational argument, the student writer establishes a quality that defines his or her reasoning abilities. If the “truths” espoused are genuinely written with heartfelt pathos and conviction, if the ideas presented are inherent with nuanced convolutions that modify “truth” even slightly or that appear in a new light, all the while establishing the conventional with a “common stock” of industry jargon that creates familiarity in the reader, then our student writer has established an acceptable ethos (33-36). By confirming the students’ stake in the
game of deductive persuasion, the seed of academic discourse is planted. First, however, as Mina Shaugnessy once proposed, a “taxonomy of academic discourse” becomes the imperative (36).

This taxonomy consists of a “compendium of knowledge” that transcends ephemeral considerations. For example, all students must learn a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible (which I would expand to all the great religions—e.g., Islam, Judaism, Buddhism), of Western Civilization, physics, economics, current events, and even pop culture. Another component of the taxonomy is “relational words,” logical connections “that produce a web of discourse in analytical writing.” According to Bizzel, a student who does not master this “common stock” of knowledge “destroys his ethos in the college intellectual life” (36-37).

Of course, Bizzel does not suggest this course to be taken in the freshman year, which may pose some logistical concerns with students, teachers, and administration alike. In addition, the “compendium of knowledge” would no doubt be challenged also. Bizzel counters this claim by indicating the need of a student to be indoctrinated into “a particular cultural group who shares this…knowledge” anyhow. Nevertheless, it comes across as hegemonic and elitist. The elitist concern, however, should not be an issue when considering that higher education remains largely available to most high school students. Furthermore, an academic elitist proves to be nothing more than a person with an established and deserved ethos floundering in a profusion of bad connotation.
Despite the pluralistic concerns of many, the academic discourse community and its product in process, the academic discourse, cannot be denied their attributes and their importance in a student’s growth. Those who demean its implementation as an exercise in hegemonic enforcement fail to remember the warm flush of accomplishment and delight upon completing a challenging regimen, such as graduating college and obtaining a degree. In addition, “the skills of elucidation and sequencing” inherent in successful discourse provides the student, the subject, a validation of self, and a means establishing his own destinies from the knowledge gained by learning his personal victimization to social forces (Bizzel 222-237). Once this victimization is realized, ideology is negotiated toward some means of resistance, and this is where the once-stifling conformity to academic discourse conventions, and the slow, methodical textual production inherent in their processes, formulate knowledge (Berlin, Rhetoric, Poetics 87) and enable agency so that “a praxis of resistance” not only remains possible, it facilitates its inevitability (Smith 39-40). In essence, the process of mastering the academic discourse conventions is not unlike an ambitious student learning to play the piano. In order to transcend the limitations of style, genre, and technique, the player must gain proficiency in all the rudiments, as well as advancing well into higher echelons of advancement in his craft. Upon the advent of a high level of mastery, then and only then can our musician find the freedom to explore virtuosity within his expanded lexicon of musical idioms. In turn, he gains validity and an agency that empowers him to resist the ubiquitous mediocrity
that misinforms what is known as the gift of music and the misled stratum of society that supports its exploitation.

*

Because of the cataclysmic divides found in the various rhetorical paradigms and methods that inform composition studies discussed in this chapter, writing instruction within English departments in the American universities ranged from stodgily directive to ebulliently liberating, depending on the rhetoric used and/or the pedagogical approach applied. Because the three main rhetorical methods mentioned above have gained their footholds over the past forty years, the teaching of Composition studies has been laden with “contradictory expectations” and “much confusion” in that time (Spear 319). In Stephen North’s *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* (1987), he imparts a metaphor, a “House of Lore,” which simulates his reservations about how writing is taught. Within the house, North depicts room after room added to the other in haphazard fashion without regard to coherence, logic, or functionality. With no blueprints at the builders’ disposal, the house is a virtual tower of Babel. Faigley recognizes the metaphor’s flawed comparisons, however. For example, because of the inability to discard the rooms, unlike the discarding of previous rhetorical paradigms precluded by new ones, the unused rooms in essence remained empty. These empty rooms imply a lack of accountability for what works in the classroom, which is North’s primary justification for his refusal to remove them (perhaps he thought that the house’s structural integrity would be in peril) (Faigley 137-138).
Faigley’s reluctance to use the North metaphor and its lack of pedagogical accountability, which fails to demonstrate “how practices are continually being reconstituted and reworked and how those reworkings produce contradictions” (138), gives rise to the use of the distillery apparatus metaphor presented in this report. The significance of using the apparatus metaphor is illustrated by its receiver vat, whose contents represent all the theoretic and paradigmatic ingredients added to the mixture over time that undergo a prolonged fermentation process. As clarified in Chapter One, a distiller (the teacher) and a sampler of the distillate (the student) represent the metaphor’s catalyst and eventual outcome, respectively. Off to the side of the apparatus, containers, loaded with various ingredients, correspond to all possible, but unused as of yet, pedagogical methods and theories; some of which, no doubt, represent the untested “maverick” ideas by which Susan Miller rebukes composition studies for its willful experimentation. Some of the ingredients within the fermenting vat have been diluted, some work to obfuscate the flavor of a previously added ingredient. Some flavors are lost until a new batch is thrown in to reinvigorate their essence. Given the ongoing cultural and historical events that occur over time, however, the insistence to restore the original flavor of the distillate (e.g., a return to Classical Rhetoric) remains an impossibility. Another factor that produces either a weaker or stronger distillate is the measuring of each additional ingredient as affected by various political factors. As dictated by the distiller’s political stance in relation to the prevalent rhetorical paradigm, a contradictory or conciliatory pose could result between the two, which predicates a different measurement of a given ingredient.
The Duality of Inebriation

Regardless of all the preceding events and the political, cultural, and historical posturing that occurs, time, a key factor in the fermentation process, nevertheless determines the strength and effectiveness of the resultant distillate; yet it is the student who remains the primary barometer for the success of the pedagogical approach taken. In essence, she is either inebriated by a newfound agency that destroys her in the end or else she finds a newly won agency inebriating and liberating, which validates a genuine ethos—and instills her to reach even greater heights.

In the next chapter, keeping in mind a student’s agency and how that agency is affected, the issues of paradigm shift that discard previous movements and clear the groundwork for their hegemonic intrusions will be presented. Using two short stories as a metaphoric means of illumination and analogy (Borges’ “Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” and Poe’s “The Purloined Letter”), these exclusionary paradigm changes will be attacked as detrimental to the three disciplines with the English Department. Instead, an argument for the social-epistemic rhetoric will be posed, not as a saving grace, but at least as a move in the right direction—a direction that doesn’t impose a paradigm change, but allows for the best attributes of previous rhetorical movements to be utilized. As a result, the social-epistemic should be used as a model for change when any notion of paradigmatic change should occur.

In conjunction with the detrimental effects of paradigm change and the advent of the social-epistemic rhetoric, the student, as subject, will be studied using Lacan’s and Burke’s various theories, which will be compared and contrasted to clarify
subject motivation and his subject position—the means by which agency is eventually asserted. The rationale for using Borge’s and Poe’s short stories provides the means to metaphorically represent rhetoric, composition, and literature studies, divided by their contentious attitudes towards each other, yet fully interdependent as defined by their common methods and goals—the common methods of finding meaning in texts and in writing that empowers a subject with the ability to critically assess any given situation. Further conflict between the disciplines only serves to alienate the student, already fragmented and decentered in the postmodern landscape. Within this realization of interdependence between the disciplines of the College English Department, lies the hope of igniting ideas for establishing common respect and enabling the ability for developing a praxis of communion and partnership.
Chapter IV—An Inebriating Agency: The Cooperation of Interdependent Disciplines within Shifting and Conflicting Paradigms

Although denounced by Berlin and Spear and Miller for their tendency to "isolate writers from political, social, and economic matters" and to distance their concern for writing for an audience (Spear 321), both the Cognitive and Expressionistic Writing Processes hold validity (albeit limited) that can't be denied. Outlining her cognitive process in her Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing, Linda Flower does have a tendency to be quite directive in her steps and strategies, but she admits that the process of writing (the steps she delineates) is recursive and that they are not necessarily "sure-fire formulas" (50-51). Nevertheless, after describing six steps for analyzing a problem and the different methods for understanding one's own process (that systematically categorize weak and powerful strategies), she then insists that "writers have three alternative ways to (solve problems)." Calling her "ways" "problem-solving approaches" that resemble hard and fast rules, Flowers then proclaims the weakness of rules as "simple-minded and...inadequate for more complex problems" (21-44), which contradicts her directive approach outlined throughout the whole book. In addition, Berlin identifies this directive process as a "rationalization of economic activity," which he equates to a "class system" of "meritocratic middle class" writers who produce a "commodified text" of qualitative "exchange value" that outlines a systematic means of solving management issues designed to enforce a discriminatory hierarchical structure, not unlike that found in the corporate business environment ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 14-15).
By contrast, the proponents of Expressionistic Writing regard its process as a means by which a writer's selfhood is explored and conveyed in an original voice. Donald Stewart, one of the proponents of ER, believed that it conveyed authentic selfhood, while raising concern, in his "Collaborative Learning and Composition" (1988), over any rhetoric associated with social construction as subject to conformity and totalitarianism (Faigley 17). Berlin begs to differ by drawing on Expressionism's elitist heritage ("the Literacy of the Liberal Culture" covered in Chapter Two), which recognized "the gift of genius" as a mental faculty capable by only a select few (Berlin "Rhetoric and Ideology" 15). Spear's commentary on the ER, paraphrasing Miller, proves even more inflammatory saying that it "reduces writing to a privatized...solipsistic experience..." (321). Despite such criticism, Expressionism cannot be fully denigrated, since its use by psychological therapists has produced "self actualization" in their patients. Likewise, James Moffett privileges "(Expressionistic) writing (as) effecting fine therapy sometimes" (Vipond 10). The operative word here being "sometimes."

Discounting all claims for or against the Expressionistic and Cognitive movements, and the Social-epistemic approach favored here, all regard writing as an ongoing process, rather than as the end-product of some prescriptive procedure. As previously mentioned, the Social-epistemic approach, with the placement of its praxis within a set ideological political boundary, engages a writer in "orders of meaning" explored and discovered through the writing process, a non-prescriptive process exclusive to the writer, but one that is situated in the cultural, historical, and social
forces that formulate it (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Poetics* 87-89). The writer, therefore, gains agency through this process, even though such success cannot be guaranteed in full.

The reading process, in turn, draws its power from a reader’s unique ability to interpret a text based on his or her social or cultural backdrop. Just as the reader cannot be confined to a “stable concept,” as Andrea Lunsford underscores, the writer must be recognized in this same light. Therefore, reading and writing, both processes defined by various social and cultural environments, cannot be separated even if reader and writer represent different factions of the environments from which they came. Lunsford, quoting Martin Nystrand, establishes a reciprocity from which neither can be divided, and from which a piece of writing cannot deny its reader or a reader its writer: “Written discourse…is the social process whereby literate individuals ‘write on the premises of the reader and read on the premises of the writer’” (86). Given this observation, we can also apply this reciprocity, an unequivocal interdependence, to the study of Literature (reading) and the teaching of Composition (writing). As disciplines, they scrutinize and critically reflect the complementary mirror images of each other, which in an optimal world, should provide a scrutiny not executed in a malicious manner, but performed in a healthy, constructive fashion. Establishing the interdependence of Literature and Composition as my evaluative basis for the rest of chapter four, an interpretation of two works of literature, “Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” by Jorge Luis Borges, and “The Purloined Letter,” by Edgar Allan Poe will be presented. In addition, both works will endure the
"terministic screen(ing)" of two important and respected twentieth-century stalwarts of literary application in their respective fields, Kenneth Burke of rhetoric and philosophy and Jacques Lacan of psychoanalysis. In "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," for example, I will compare Lacan’s and Burke’s ideas applicable to my own interpretation of the text in regards to the cataclysm fomented by paradigm shifts that disregard previous movements with knee-jerk derision and displace subjects with routine abandon. In Poe’s "The Purloined Letter," I will personify the disciplines of Composition and Literature using the characters in the story as the basis for each discipline’s actions, from which I will demonstrate each discipline’s interdependence and its effect on the student as subject, while evaluating the presumed hierarchy that exists in many English departments across the American academic landscape.

From what J. Agassi calls Borges’ most “celebrated instance” on the “execution of the nightmare” of fabrication (287), the story, “Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," centers on a disputed region, Uqbar, a region that may or may not exist in Iraq or Asia Minor, discovered by a friend of Borges in a renegade article in one volume of an encyclopedia, from which other copies of that volume remain identical except for the insertion of this one article. Doubting the veracity of Uqbar, the narrator of the story—presumably, though not certainly Borges—nevertheless engages in a search for all clues of the region’s existence, without luck, until his friend produces a copy of the phantom encyclopedia volume that contains the four-page article.
The two friends pore over the encyclopedia and its descriptions of Uqbar, its geography, its history, its literature—all steeped in ambiguity, but distinguished by its probability. The region’s literature, for example, is a “literature of fantasy,” in which its legends and epics refer exclusively to two “imaginary realms,” one being the realm of Tlon (70). Within this fantasy realm, the world exists in a “successive, temporal, but not spatial” conception. This lack of spatiality precludes the use of nouns; therefore, only “impersonal verbs, modified by monosyllabic suffixes (or prefixes) functioning as adverbs” exist. This characteristic applies only to the southern portion of the realm. Given this linguistic formulation, a normal sentence in English like, “The moon rose over the river” would translate as “Upward, behind the onstreaming it mooned.” In the northern hemisphere, the language is somewhat similar, even though monosyllabic adjectives replace the verb as its central “primary unit,” which act as nouns, but only when depicted as strung-together adjectives. Moon, consequently, translates as “aerial-bright above dark-round” (73).

The orderly manner in which Tlon distinguishes itself, for example, as a paradigm, or as an established movement with set laws and prohibitions ignores the non-spatial aspect of its existence (or non-existence), which, in turn, precludes the possibility to put into practice any of the laws it expounds. Nevertheless, ironically, Tlon’s establishment as a paradigm prevails. Borges furthers this notion by extrapolating on these “associations of ideas” that through “the(ir) joining-together (renders) a posterior state of the subject, (who) can neither affect nor illuminate the prior state” (italics Borges’).
Consequently, in Composition (driven by rhetorical paradigms and their concerns) and Literature studies (informed by theory), using Borges' observations, the event of a paradigmatic shift is strictly marked without reference to a prior movement's attributes. Most likely the shift is typified by what I referred to above as "knee-jerk derision," a means of explaining the world in all-new terms, a world unique to its own conception, one which blatantly discounts its forebears. One only has to look back recently in the paradigm shift that characterized the Modernist movement in Literature that was replaced by postmodernistic notions such as the decentering of the subject or the voiding of absolutist objectivity, a move that relegated meaning in a subject's position to scattered fragments of subjective perception along a sliding chain of signifiers. In Composition studies, this shift was illustrated by the move from the Current-traditional Rhetoric to the various writing-as-process movements. In both instances, these shifts, compelled by world events (World Wars, Civil Rights Act, etc.), disregarded their predecessor movements as irrelevant or out-dated. In "Uqbar, Tlon, and Orbis Tertius," Borges sees "the posterior state of the subject," therefore, as a subject relegated to the confining realm of the present without contextual reference to the past movements that could illuminate present dilemmas and issues, at least in part.

At the end of Borges' eloquent story, we discover that Tlon is in fact the "confabulations" of a secret English society, whose sole design was "to invent a country" (78). Though rumored and conjectured as an imaginary realm within the concrete reality of Uqbar, the idea of Tlon caught on through its "appearance of
order... (that) could spellbind and hypnotize mankind,” in as much the same way that “anti-Semitism and Nazism” subjugated whole nations (81).

In this same way, Borges implicates the confabulation of Tlon. He observes that this “hyperreality” (Baudrillard r.i.p.) has “disintegrated this world” into the forgetfulness of its deteriorated state, in which it has now become “the rigor of chess masters, not of angels” (81). Therefore, the epigram that precedes the encyclopedia article on Uqbar, which proclaims hateful admonitions of progressive and gradual change, bespoken by the generations of “chess masters” belonging to the Orbis Tertius (the moniker assigned to this sinister group) now has relevance. The epigram reads as follows:

For one of those gnostics, the visible universe was an illusion or, more precisely, a sophism. Mirrors and fatherhood are hateful because they multiply it and proclaim it (italics Borges’) (69).

Since this epigraph so strongly admonishes any acceptance of a world other than its creators’ own conception, an inverse formulation can be used to demonstrate my discordant view of radical paradigmatic shifts. Using this inverse formulation, I maintain that the adaptation of new movements fathered in conjunction with their predecessors’ ideologies, mirrored within these new movements’ principles, empowers a subject by which she is not forced to suffer the influence of radical paradigmatic shifts that displace her, her subject position, and hence, her agency. Rather, a gradual, less divisive, change—informed by holdover ideologies, but not mastered by them—can at least diminish the instance of a subject’s
Poe’s “The Purloined Letter” opens in the library of C. Auguste Dupin. Two men, Dupin and his friend, the unnamed narrator of the story, sit in silence, smoking meerschaum pipes amid the haze of their thoughts. The narrator, engaged in silent discussion with himself, is recalling a conversation with Dupin earlier that evening when Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police, bounds into the room. The Prefect then unfolds the story of a stolen letter, a letter whose contents if it were revealed would harm the reputation of the wife of a high-level official, presumably a king or a person of royalty. The perpetrator of the crime is alleged, but his guilt cannot be proven without the letter in his possession or within his property. The Prefect’s task, for which he will be awarded handsomely, therefore, is to locate the letter in the hands or in the domain of one Minister D—, the alleged criminal.

Confusion, however, reigns on the part of the Prefect, a man “fond of the cant of diplomacy” (332), who consequently possesses an air self-aggrandizement. For when Dupin suggests to him that the mystery of the letter’s whereabouts may be “a little too plain...a little too self-evident” (331), the Prefect rebuffs his remark with laughter and incredulity.

The story progresses with the Prefect describing in detail the impeccable methods of search in Monsieur D—’s apartment and on his person; but G— and his men always come up short. When a month later the Prefect returns for a visit, the two men—Dupin and the narrator—are engaged in their meditations “very nearly as
before” (337). The Prefect echoes his disappointment about their inability to solve the matter and muses that “(he) wouldn’t mind giving (his)...check for fifty thousand francs to anyone who could obtain for me that letter” (337). To which Dupin responds by pulling the letter in question from his bureau drawer and handing it to the Prefect.

The rest of the story involves Dupin’s explanation (told to the narrator) for his procurement of the letter and the means and rationale by which he solved the crime himself. On a superficial level, these events are certainly plausible, but some of Poe’s purposeful inconsistencies crop up upon closer reading, inconsistencies that suggest a dementedly multiplied figure in the character of Dupin. Perhaps Dupin’s inscription, appearing at the very end of the story, which he wrote on a mock-copy—a worthless fabrication of the “purloined letter” and left in Minister D—’s apartment in place of the original—gives us a clue to this deranged side of his schizophrenic multiplicity.

The inscription, written in French, is taken from Crébillon’s *Atrée* and translates as, “A design so deadly,/If not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyestes” (Galloway 532), which refers to King Atreus’s revenge against his brother Thyestes, who some time before had seduced the King’s wife, who, in turn, gave birth to the seducer’s son, Plisthenes. The king, catching wind of this illicit union and the fruit it bore, then held a banquet, and without remorse fed Plisthenes’ remains to his unwitting father. Although King Atreus felt his act of revenge was suitable to the crime, in truth, it remains a pathetic justification for such violent behavior on his part, not unlike Dupin’s own revenge against D— for the “evil turn” the latter performed
against Dupin "in Vienna once" (348). Perhaps the injury sustained, however, was self-inflicted as I will attempt to prove below.

Poe gives many hints throughout his story that Dupin, the narrator, Minister D—, and his unseen brother, in fact, may very well be the same person. For example, at the beginning of the story, the narrator (again, unnamed) and Dupin sit in protracted silence (as if they were actually one person) and in darkness until the Prefect dashes in for the sole purpose of consulting Dupin. And indeed, it is only Dupin with whom the Prefect addresses, despite the narrator's intrusions into their conversation. When the first scene closes, this fact is illustrated after the Prefect assures Dupin that Minister D—'s home had been thoroughly searched, to which the narrator concludes, "You have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is not upon the premises, as you suppose." The Prefect responds (but never calls the narrator by name), and he is quick to dismiss the remark as if the narrator wasn't there, by saying, "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?" (337).

Another example, perhaps not as oblique, is Dupin's opening remark as the story begins and as he is deliberating whether to turn on the light in the study as the Prefect walks in: "If it is any point requiring reflection," he says, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark" (330), which seems to imply Dupin's insistence at staying in the dark for anything requiring reflection, including his own mirror image, which could reveal the truly divided nature of his inner being, or at least his darker half, as illustrated by his allusion to Crébillon. He contrasts this sentiment later on in the story when commenting on the "excessively obvious" that escapes notice by most
people, which he associates with street signs and the solving of crimes, but then hints that this observation could mirror his own troubled inner state that has become only too obvious: "The physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident" (345).

Other examples abound in the text, for example, Dupin's comparison of Minister D— to himself when the Prefect berates D— as a poet, which he regards as "one remove from a fool," to which Dupin responds, "I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself" (334). In addition, when Dupin visits D— at his home at the end of the story, he observes D— as "perhaps the most really energetic human being now alive," but then reveals a fact that only D— would know, "but that is only when nobody sees him" (346). Somewhat later, when Dupin finally spies the letter in question, he notes its decrepit condition as "so inconsistent with the true methodical habits of D—" (italics Poe's), which again reveals knowledge exclusive to someone very close to D— or to himself only (347). These observations and the fact that Dupin's solving of the crime of the stolen letter are nothing more than insider knowledge, in which the discovery of the letter is a result of D—'s and Dupin's unified embodiment and of Dupin's privileged knowledge of the Prefect's own arrogant disdain for those he regards as fools and their simple ways.

The most damning evidence of this personality split, however, occurs in a conversation between Dupin and the narrator as they argue both the attributes and drawbacks of being either a poet or a mathematician in the person of Minister D—,
who is either a poet and a mathematician, or he has a brother who is a poet, and he himself is the mathematician:

‘But is this really the poet?’ I asked. There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained a reputation in letters. The minister...is a mathematician, and no poet.’

‘You are mistaken; I know him well (says Dupin); he is both. As poet and mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all...’ (italics mine) (342).

Both the narrator and Dupin continue to argue Dupin’s assertion that mathematicians cannot reason, but the ambiguities and seeming contradictions suggested by both men’s dialogue are already rife. From the dialogue above, we cannot be certain who is whom, but if the narrator and Dupin are one in the same, just as Dupin and Minister D—share knowledge that can only be exclusively their own (which conflicts with the presumed opposition they have toward the other), then a four-part schizophrenia may exist or, at minimum, a double duality occurs. Given either scenario, it can be ascertained that such knowledge remains hidden to the smug Prefect (again underscoring his faulty logic used for solving crimes). Additionally, the motivation for Minister D—’s crime of stealing the letter becomes one of an inner struggle for dominance, just as Dupin’s act of taking the letter back becomes a measure of self-correction (possibly guilt?) which negates the power the unwitting D—in his mind still thinks he has. As Barbara Johnson says, (There exists a) “rivalry over something neither man will credit the other with possessing, the retrospective
An Inebriating Agency

revision of the origins of both their resemblances and their differences, thus spirals
backward and forward in an indeterminable pattern of cancellation and duplication.”

To Johnson, dominance within D—’s and Dupin’s opposition is “impossible to
determine” (467). What is apparent is that Dupin privileges art. His foil,
then—Minister D— —, seemingly privileges the logical world of math because as
stated in the text, the narrator believes that D— may have “written learnedly on the
Differential Calculus” (342). The two men, Dupin and D—, in their struggle and
counter-struggle for power, therefore, become agents who identify their signifiers (the
unnamed narrator and the unnamed brother of D—) who, in turn, privilege math and
(by process of elimination) art, respectively. Yet these signifiers, regardless of
whether the scenario here is of a thoroughly divided schizophrenic or two men
suffering from twin afflictions of their conflicting dualistic divides, their unnamed
status (which represents an unknown or incomplete signification) renders them
meaningless to their named counterparts.

The reason for such a long-winded explanation of the personalities involved in
Poe’s story is twofold: One, to establish the dynamic of Dupin, narrator, Minister
D—, and his brother in comparison with Composition Studies, and how its conflicting
theories and colliding paradigms over the past forty years represents its plight—a
plight both self-inflicted and inflicted from without; And, two, to establish the
character of the Prefect, Monsieur G—, as akin to Literature Studies’ standing in the
English department, from which the discipline has been held in high-esteem since its
recognition in the university as a distinct branch of learning within English (circa
1920), but as a discipline which persists in its stubbornness to recognize only one prevailing paradigm (e.g., Modernism, Postmodernism), even though it embraces sub-movements (e.g., deconstruction, post-structuralism, etc.) within those paradigms. In the end, either approach, whether it is Composition’s deluge of differing and conflicting paradigms or Literature’s stubbornness to maintain a paradigm that primarily informs its sub-movements, both have worked to conflict the student subject, which calls for a reexamination and reevaluation of the interdependence that each discipline shares with its forebear Rhetoric and with each other.

Before we entertain the subjection of the subject, however, let us revisit Poe’s four divided characters from his story, this time in context with Composition Studies under a Lacanian perspective. Using an example of his childhood, Lacan establishes an application of the old Saussurian algorithm that privileges the “Signifier” over the “signified”:

A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated across from each other in a compartment next to an outside window that provides a view of the station platform buildings going by as the train comes to a stop. “Look,” says the brother, “we’re at Ladies!” “Imbecile!” replies his sister, “Don’t you see we’re at Gentlemen” (Lacan 143).

From this example, we can see that the siblings’ seating arrangement offers each a perspective of what Lacan calls their two “homelands toward which each of their souls will take flight on divergent wings” (144), much in the same way that Dupin
(art) and Minister D—(math) "take flight on divergent wings" that diametrically fulfills each men's desire by finding meaning in the other's desire—a desire to be recognized by the other (Lacan 58).

In this same way, for the last forty years, Composition Studies has been embroiled in a conflict between a holdover paradigm (Current-traditional rhetoric) and a fairly new one (the process movement). Yet conflict erupts within both movements. In the Current-traditional, the teacher's "divergent wings" take flight in their pedagogical approaches. For example, Hillocks provides an example of Professor James' approach where each student moves through progressively more difficult essays (from personal experience to a final essay incorporating trend-analysis) that stress "cognitive development... (and) moral development too" (62). By contrast, Professor Rose, again used in Hillocks' book, is overtly more directive, stressing form over content—the five-paragraph essay—using the single mode, exposition, to expedite the teaching of composition, but allowing only a handful of topics from which the students can choose (e.g., "What are three dangerous drugs?" "What are three jobs for the future?") (54-55). The two divergent approaches represent the privileged signifiers, which Lacan stresses "will raise dissension," but their steadfast adherence to their methods (especially in Professor Rose's case) forces a refusal of each to "give ground...without detracting from the other's glory" (144), which represents not a traditionally construed other, but rather, as we had discovered in the relationship between Dupin and D—above, each man's desire is the other's desire, a desire to be recognized by the other (Lacan 58).
Within the process movement, as explained at the beginning of this chapter, the three movements—expressionistic, cognitive, and social-epistemic—conflict mightily in pedagogical approach, but the true contrast exists in regards to the process movement's departure from the Current-traditional, especially in the disparity between the CTR movement and expressionistic writing—one exclusively formulaic (with variations), the other essentially entertaining students to exercise their solipsistic tendencies. From this disparity, as competing signifiers (the large Ss in Saussure's algorithm) who slither along the corridors of Lacan's figurative train station—an exclusively "signifying structure"—and who "impress their curves upon the (hot and cold air ducts) from which indignation and scorn hiss" (144), desire is never fulfilled and, likewise, meaning is lost forever, slipping and sliding, never engaging along the ever-spinning sprocket of signifiers.

For Burke, in contrast to Lacan's dreary outlook, rhetoric effects some hope for unity in the human race; therefore Dupin, Minister D—, his brother, and the narrator may reconcile under rhetoric as a means for symbolic inducement that may promote cooperation among them and help them discover common meaning (Herrick 223). Because the self, to Burke, has been constructed by environmental and linguistic forces and always remains in some form of construction, however, this unity cannot be guaranteed, in fact it's nearly impossible (Crusius 38). Part of this near impossibility has to more to do with one aspect of the nature of language that is far too prevalent these days. For example, language itself exists as a duplicitous agent when abstract ideologies are concretized and simplified through communication
media, providing for extremist positions that establish hierarchies. Since language "inscribes these regimes of power" (Crusius 27), neither the characters in Poe's story, or the inscribed paradigms within Composition Studies have hope of reconciling.

Before painting any hope of individual agency into a corner, however, Burke establishes a means "of imposing a degree of order and significance" in the world of chaos and conflict. That means is what he calls the "drama of moral choice" (not unlike Nietzsche's will to power) (Crusius 42). For example, if I consciously choose to reject my Catholic faith because of the widespread pedophile abuse cases and the manipulation of those cases by Church officials, then I am presumed an actor (an agent) in a "drama of moral choice." If no other considerations, be they epistemological, metaphysical, scientific, or natural, can change my mind, then the "best account" regarding my decision to leave the Church supercedes them, despite any attempts made to dissuade my choice based on values (the Church does more good than harm) and facts (the Church is rich in tradition) (Taylor 58-59, Crusius 42).

For Lacan, there is no agent, no "locus of moral decision" within him (Crusius 42). Instead, the subject, at the optimal pinnacle of his power (within the Symbolic register), acts as a "intersubjective structure of culture and language," again, subjugated to the desire of the other (Skura 354). For Burke, the issue of identity is solved—despite our finite attributes and qualities, and despite our inability to thwart off our tendencies for abject failure—by the "drama of moral choice," which allows for a "limited notion of uniqueness and choice" and a means to construct "our selves"
through personal determination and from, as Burke says, "(an) inheritance...earned anew" (Crusius 42-43).

In addition, rhetoric, also serves to "induce cooperation in beings," despite my warning above about language’s duplicitous nature. Since this nature is a fault of those who engage in reductive propensities, then we can establish a reprieve in the function of language through individuals’ responses to symbols. This function of rhetoric is by no means a catalyst to linguistic perfection, rather it serves to provide insight, recognition, and identification—a “consubstantiality” (the commonalties shared through our aspirations, our physicality, and our language)—“that involve ways of...contributing to social cohesion” (Rhetoric of Motives 43-44, Herrick 224). Therefore, if Poe’s divided characters and Composition’s disparate paradigms spent their energies away from confrontation and mindless solipsism—not unlike Dupin, who Johnson recalls has “jump(ed) into the fray as a wronged victim himself, by recalling the ‘evil turn’ the Minister once did him in Vienna” (467)—then by stimulating an atmosphere of cooperation they could “extend a line of analysis in some particular direction” (Rhetoric of Motives 46).

Within this line of analysis, the uses of and responses to symbols could “symbolically establish between beings of unequal status” a consubstantiality that “extends far into the realm of the idealistic.” Burke’s idealism, however, is not a utopia, but it does represent a means of symbolically knowing one’s limitations on “meta-physical” attainment and how this position plays out in an overall scheme. In this idealistic state, hierarchies are still with us, as they will be always. Consequently,
in this idealism, universal order is perceived as steps on a pyramid reaching skyward, each higher step representing “mounting worth.” As each being from every persuasion is established hierarchically (by what means Burke doesn’t say) along the pyramid steps, from their stations they are able to strive towards perfection of their own unique abilities and to continue their ascendance within the collective, progressive ascendance of all others, to which, in the end, they each reach their individual capabilities—an attainment of a pluralistic, figurative godhead. By virtue of this attainment it appears that Burke is answering Lacan’s construction of a non-agent (although Burke’s work precedes the psychoanalyst’s) because within the comfort of each subject recognizing his maximum potential, joined with a spirit of shared commonality among all, the mindless scourge of all desire—the seed of discontent—is removed (*Rhetoric of Motives* 333).

By contrast, the hierarchical boundaries established by the Prefect, Monsieur G— in Poe’s story, exacerbates the seed of the official’s discontent—his desire to solve what appears to be a simple crime. Additionally, it is his pride that prevents him from taking Dupin’s advice, who says that it “is the very simplicity of the thing which puts (Monsieur G—) at fault” (*Poe* 331); advice, if taken, could have varied the means of his investigation, but advice, nevertheless, that he chose not to consider until after the crime was “solved.” Rather, the Prefect resigns himself to his tried and true method of investigation (albeit a very thorough one), not unlike Literature Studies’ insistence at working within a prevailing paradigm, a paradigm that transplants the prior one as if it hadn’t existed, except as a wall of contrast by which
reactions are measured from the thrust and velocity of an ideological ball thrown against it. This displacement is exemplified in the twentieth century by the Postmodernistic supplanting of its predecessor, Modernism. For example, the component of presence in Modernism has been replaced by Postmodern absence, centering by dispersal, master code by idiolect, metaphysics by irony, even paradigm by syntagm, which underscores the temporal exclusivity characteristic to one isolated era, at the negation of all other eras (Perloff 170).

What is especially problematic is the theoretical applications of many of the movements within the Postmodern era that represent group identities at the expense of the individual identity. For example, in Queer Theory, Judith Butler bemoans “the creation of fixed images of gay and lesbian identity (that) can result in the ‘regulatory imperative’ to be a ‘proper’ gay or lesbian individual, just as it existed with Feminism in the 1970s, ‘where ‘Woman’ implicitly defined an ideal for every woman to live up to, depriving each individual of the right to be whoever and whatever she was’” (Richter 1440). In another example, Elizabeth Flynn wonders how gender affects reading and concludes that women possess “a willingness to listen, a sensitivity to emotional nuance, (and) an ability to empathize,” which Lunsford quickly deflates as a “tendency to report on writers and readers as if they were all fairly similar in experience and outlook” (86) that underscores the pervasive generalizations pertaining to identity from those theoreticians within the movement who formulate these theories and from those on the outside who perceive them. Nina Baym—in a rebuke of Henry Louis Gates’ privileging of the African oral tradition that expands
the literary canon to include a multicultural perspective—decries Gates’ “construction of an ‘essence’ (that) defines some writers as part of a tradition while excluding others” (Richter 1535), which again emphasizes how individual identity (in this case as specified by one’s allegiance to a cultural canon as a means of representation) can be relinquished for the benefit of group identity.

Beyond these observations, implicated also is the dissolution of the subject within Deconstruction, Poststructuralism, and, of course, in Lacanian psychoanalysis. I do not stress here a denigration of these disciplines; they offer a means of comparison, a possibility for a constructive dialogue among differences. Even Burke is quick to establish how, for example, such movements, like Modernism, which stress a centered subject, caught in the web of positivistic notions of absolutism, may benefit from a corrective outlook:

Since the body is dogmatic, a generator of belief, society might well be benefited by the corrective of a disintegrating art, which converts each simplicity into a complexity, which ruins the possibility of ready hierarchies, which concerns itself with the problematical, the experimental, and thus by implication works corrosively upon those expansionist certainties preparing the way for our social cataclysms (Counter-Statement 105).

Although appreciative of the Postmodern “corrective” as stated above, the movement’s paradigmatic insistence on non-subjectivity, consequently, becomes
itself as positivistic as if one were to impose the Modernist subject at the center of all existence and the Platonic Truth as its basis for understanding that Truth.

Extreme opposition to Postmodern non-subjectivity, however, is just as dangerous. Rorty speaks of the existentialist idea to “send a conversation off in new directions,” but he insists that these new directions (e.g., new discourses, new sciences which may result in new perceptions of objective truth) are merely “accidental byproducts” of the human exploration into one’s essence, an exploration that deludes “man with the notion that he knows himself, or anything else” (378-379).

Suffering under similar delusions is the patient under Lacanian psychoanalysis. In his practice, Lacan concerned himself with curing patients, which seems to imply the patient’s subjective agency once the patient was cured; but since, to Lacan, therapy stressed a thorough analysis of an analysand’s (patient’s) remarks, the unconscious utterances—puns, wordplay, slips of the tongue, and silence—represented nothing more than “nonreferential plays of the signifiers” (Skura 351) that elicited the Other’s discourse through the unconscious (300), and since “unconscious desire is the Other’s desire” (256), the subject remained hopelessly powerless. The question of this powerlessness, or more appropriately, the effectiveness of Lacan’s therapy sessions, was raised in 1951. After La Société Psychoanalytique de Paris (SPP) questioned his consistently shortened sessions with patients, considerably shorter than the “standard analytical hour,” Lacan argued that because the unconscious was a timeless concept, standard-length sessions were unnecessary. Whether his clinical techniques were successful or not remains in
question; however, two years later, Lacan was elected president of the SPP, although it appears his reputation as “the most original and productive theoretician” superceded any clinical successes (Lacan.com 1).

Regardless of his clinical prowess, as a theoretician, it cannot be denied that Lacan still presents new insights into both literature and pedagogy. Returning to the Borges’ text, using the effects of “transference” as a guide, we will soon see how “the habit of Tlon” (the mollification of the masses under the imaginary realm’s questionable conceptions of order) becomes not only reality, but a means to hegemonic conquest within a well-defined paradigm. Before we return to Borges, however, a definition of transference, in context with pedagogy, is in order.

According to Gregory Jay, transference is resisted by a student when she disrupts the position of knowledge, that of a teacher’s mastery of his subject. This ability to resist relieves the student of any responsibility for the production of knowledge or the effects that this knowledge creates. When the student is compliant, however, and sees the teacher in a fatherly role, the student then assumes a position within the Symbolic order, a position controlled by the discourse of the teacher. Lacan’s rereading of the Freudian concept of the Oedipal complex establishes not only the “Name of the Father” (teacher), but the “No of the Father” (teacher) as well. Therefore, the desires of the teacher, prohibitions as well as desired objectives, dictate the student’s actions within a surrounding social order (the classroom, the school). Despite what could be construed as a loathing of the teacher, the student loses her agency—her will to power (of which Lacan would deny in the first place)—because
of the justification and defense of her actions and those of the teacher’s that she imposes upon herself through her desire to fulfill what the Other desires (785-788).

In this same way, we see the citizens of the world in “Uqbar, Tlon, and Orbis Tertius,” spellbound to “the rigors of Tlon…and of chess masters” (81). As they fall to the “appearance of order,” the authority of the Orbis Tertius supercedes all presumed authority and represents the “authorized text of socio-cultural formations” (Jay 788).

As I had mentioned previously, because Tlon, as dictated by the rules of its language, employs no spatial aspects within its existence (or non-existence), the ability to put into practice any of the laws it expounds is an impossibility. Therefore, compliance by the worldly citizens is voluntary; all that is required in this fabrication of order is a self-reflexive desire to conform, the same desire held by its masters.

Both Composition studies and Literature have seen paradigms die, and with them, the established patriarchies that die also. Because of the willingness of both disciplines to regard a prevailing paradigm with a spellbound awe of its order (Literature with Postmodernism and to a lesser extent, Composition with its long allegiance to the Current-traditional forty years prior), any reference to a previous era is a mirroring of its predecessor, and hence an advocacy of it.

The current status of Composition studies represents a different scenario with its inner conflicts within the process movement explained at the beginning of this chapter. What similarity both Literature and Composition shares is the irreparable harm done to the student subject, torn by conflict in one and relegated to conformity
in the other. By denying any sense of agency in the subject, Borges’ observation of
the subject is recalled as a total relegation to the confining realm of the present
without contextual reference to the past.

The solutions should thus be apparent. The reading and writing processes are
reciprocal agents in this warfare, but their functions cannot be separated, just as the
functions of Composition and Literature cannot be estranged from one another, as
they have been in the university for nearly one hundred years now. In my next
chapter, these ideas will be presented together as the resulting distillate, the
culmination of years of theory and praxis within each discipline acting without the
other, which when finally combined together, they can begin to demonstrate their
interdependent natures redolent of the old essence of unity, savored in a new and
viable spirit of cooperation.
Chapter V—Postscript: Theoretical and Paradigmatic Blends—Full Bodied and Matured to Perfection?

In my depiction of the distillery apparatus representing the English Department, with its blend of ingredients undergoing a prolonged fermentation process, the problematic issue of literacy—the current crisis regarding the slow decline of readership in the United States—is not addressed and begs clarification. Though it implies a subject (the student) that is the recipient, or better yet, the imbiber of the resulting distillate, my apparatus metaphor demonstrates only two forms of agency, or what I call “the agency of inebriation” or “the inebriation of agency.” Simply stated, within my distillery metaphor the subject either succeeds or he fails. Furthermore, the rate of that failure or success can only be guessed.

According to the results of an adult literacy assessment, conducted in 2003, as reported in a recent Washington Post article, perfunctory reading comprehension levels in college graduates looms at a paltry 31%. In graduate students, those levels rise minimally to 41%.

“What is most disturbing,” says Mark Schneider, commissioner of education statistics, “is that the assessment is not designed to test your understanding of Proust, but to test your ability to read labels” (Romano 1).

From her perspective as a teacher and a theoretician, Lunsford implicates selective university admissions that assign no writing component to their matriculation process. She reports that, in their first semester, freshman students sign up for one mandated composition course taught by adjuncts or graduate students. After one year, forty percent of these students have already left school. As adjuncts
rotate to other assignments and graduate students finish their theses—whose subject matter often does not relate to composition studies or pedagogy—the remaining 60% of students enroll in other courses, building credits up through their upper-division studies and the core curricula of their declared majors. A typical scenario, she says, is that these holdover students rarely receive additional writing instruction in their subsequent coursework. Somehow a myth of coverage prevails implying that all students have received ample writing instruction sometime before their current course load (Lunsford 90).

As a person with a vested interest in the pedagogical outcomes reflected in some of her more callous remarks, I take issue. Nevertheless, most of her argument reflects a valid concern. For example, she poses politically charged inquiries, such as: “How will literacy be defined and measured? Who will have access to full and defined literacy? Who will be denied? and, Who is responsible for literacy?” (89).

The answers to these questions depend on whom you ask—which thereby designates them as political fodder for brash, politico-talking heads who implicate everyone but their high-dollar campaign contributors for a system-wide failure, without even attempting to address the issues. As a composition teacher (establishing one viewpoint from a vast Crayola® spectrum of possibilities), the answer lies in establishing a student’s validity, a validity internalized and then externalized through both the reading and writing processes previously discussed.

The composing, or writing process, and its association with a no-holds inventive capability found its original power in the Romantic rhetoric. Since Emerson
considered the writing process’s chief component, metaphor—which he described as an analogical method used to transcend language and physical reality and perception—as “the paradigm of language use,” its efficacy as a persuasive tool and as a unifying symbol constructed subject and object, giving humankind (all humankind!) its first breaths of a newly born agency (Berlin, Writing Instruction 11, 47-48). With agency, however, comes responsibility. In “The American Scholar,” Emerson implores the Harvard graduates in his commencement address to awaken and motivate Americans to “look from under the iron lids” of their “sluggard intellects” (196), while Thoreau immobilizes the power within ourselves to behold our identity, but warns that “nobleness begins at once to refine a man’s features, (while) any meanness or sensuality imbrutes them” (468). Bizzel, in addition, reflects on how difficult the exercising of our agencies could be by advising us “to confront the social ramifications” of a reborn ethos borne by the birth of this agency. Today this “drama of moral choice” and our willingness to confront the ramifications of our socially codified ideologies is best exemplified in the social-epistemic rhetoric—the amalgam of previous rhetoric(s), by which my distillery metaphor implies that the construing of such an amalgam was only inevitable.

Just as Burke never regarded drama as a metaphor to represent human action (Gusfield 35), my distillery metaphor transcends its original analogy of the English Department’s composition (pun intended) to include its history, its hierarchy, and its praxis (and the results of such praxis) in a vacuum, a vacuum in which its ingredients undergo a chemical (or rather figurative) metamorphosis. In this way my above
comment regarding the amalgamated nature of the social-epistemic as an inevitability, the chemical transfiguration within the distillery vat, after years of theoretical invocations and paradigmatic shifts, transcends the meaning of its original description.

In another example, using my distillery apparatus again as the basis for my argument, we can isolate the convergence (or non-convergence) of theory and praxis within each discipline and within each movement of each discipline. In Literature studies, as we have seen, the hegemonic proscription over intervening or conflicting theories offered no alternative method other than the prevailing ideals of a dominant paradigm. In this sense, theory prevails over praxis and identity is established, cherished almost. When the current-traditional rhetoric reigned in Composition studies in its hey-day, it too gained an identity with its preference of theory over praxis, but it proved to be a notorious identity, forceful and directive in its approach. When this approach confirmed its straight-jacket approach as detrimental to students, the process movement was born. But the expressive movement bore no theory but a free-fall solipsism and the cognitive movement couldn’t escape its prescriptive procedure that hand-cuffed students and their creative processes (Neel 3-11). As a result, both movements proved to be quick fixes in Composition’s search for identity, but as Jasper Neel says, “we lost both our cultural justification and our reason for being” (10).

Not until the 1970s, did praxis and theory converge into a equitable medium in Composition studies. The social-epistemic rhetoric allows for a subject’s
negotiation in his ideology that precedes his writing. The open-ended writing process, in turn, allows for knowledge gained as a result of the process to be amended, corrected, or confirmed. Hence, Composition's identity is secure in the face of our pluralistic world, yet flexible enough in its approach to allow its identity to be modified, just as our own identities are modified by social forces over time.

Stabilized by an assurance of identity then, both Composition and Literature must work together, as equitable partners in the vacuum of the distillery vat, to establish their interdependence, not to establish their individual strataums as prevailing over the other as they once had done. The acknowledgement of the reciprocity of the reading and writing processes as a shared social undertaking is a step in the right direction (Landsford 86). The pivotal step in this acknowledged interdependence, however, is establishing rhetoric as the glue that holds both Composition and Literature together in a shared reliance. For as Berlin says, "there is the aesthetic of the rhetorical text just as there is a rhetorical dimension to the aesthetic" (Poetics, Rhetoric 100). Once this realization is confirmed, perhaps the conjoining of theory, praxis, and the acknowledgement of a joint interdependence will devise the means, and apply the groundwork, to help our students find success that can be measured in numbers that far exceed the paltry survey results of late.
Bibliography


Bibliography


---. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II—The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the


Lunsford, Andrea. “Rhetoric and Composition.” Introduction to Scholarship in

McQuade, Donald. “Composition and Literary Studies.” Redrawing the Boundaries:
The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies. Eds. Stephen
Greenblatt and Giles Gunn. New York: Modern Language Association of
America, 1992. 482-519.

Miller, Susan. “How I Teach Writing: How to Teach Writing? To Teach Writing?”


Neel, Jasper. “Reclaiming Our Theoretical Heritage: A Big Fish Tale.”

Perloff, Marjorie. “Modernist Studies.” Redrawing the Boundaries: The
Transformation of English and American Literary Studies. Eds. Stephen
Greenblatt and Giles Gunn. New York: Modern Language Association of

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Purloined Letter.” The Fall of the House of Usher and Other
Bibliography


