AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Lisa Ede

First year college writing classes originated in the United States at Harvard University in 1874. Since then, theorizing such a course has proven a place of contention, as its purposes and subjects have proven difficult to sort and impossible to agree upon. When Harvard first began teaching introductory composition, literature played an integral role in the course, both as subject matter and as a means of acculturation for an increasingly diverse student body. Since then, many universities have continued to use literature as an important component of what has remained the only course largely required of all first year students. However, the use of literature in introductory composition has been contested since such courses began. Conflicting ideals have typified the conversation concerning the role(s) of reading in writing classes, in large part because of how the discussion has been framed. The difficulty in framing in part stems from participants thus far addressing the issue in limiting ways. For example, some have claimed that the issue had already been resolved, while others have argued to separate the discussion of literature in first year writing from theoretical, institutional, and historical concerns, given contradictory accounts of that history, or denied it altogether.
Re-examining that history demonstrates that the uses and purposes of literature in first-year writing have been continually and critically implicated in issues far more complex than whether or not a poem appears in a writing class. Institutions subordinated composition to literature in English departments, which led first to writing departments turning to literature as a validating subject matter, then later rejecting it to assert the independence of writing as a discipline. Institutional and political struggles have clouded adequate theorization of reading and writing in first-year classes as well. The discussion has sometimes treated both reading and writing unproblematically, and even recent efforts to introduce to the conversation multiple ways of writing have ignored related and multiple processes of reading. Rewriting a historical narrative of how literature has been used in first-year writing that includes theoretical and institution concerns clarifies how those concerns underwrite more recent discussion. Bringing those concerns to the surface allows a richer theorizing of introductory composition and literature's role in it, particularly with the inclusion of recent challenges to the privileged nature of the category "literature." Transferring a prevalent model of writing as a cognitive, expressive, or social-cultural process to similarly identify reading processes offers one means by which we might reconfigure first-year writing, inviting students to engage various ways of reading and writing. Addressing ways in which theoretical, institutional, and historical forces have shaped first-year writing provides the means by which we might be more reflexive and critical in shaping such courses in the future. It also might allow the conversation of the role(s) of literature in composition to leave its 120-year stasis and take a progressive turn.
The Role(s) of Literature in Introductory Composition Classrooms.

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Peter B. Caster
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The trial and the joy of history is that any particular moment is overdetermined, brought into being by many forces and contingencies. So it has been with this thesis, in part emerging from my own intersecting identities of student and teacher of rhetoric and composition—identities constituted in relationships with others. As a student, I would like most of all to thank Dr. Lisa Ede for meticulously reading and commenting on multiple drafts of this thesis, for providing challenge and affirmation in equal measure, and for her compassion, all given without thought of recompense. I would also like to thank Dr. Vicki Collins, who kept reading even without the signposts, and Dr. Bob Wess, who showed me that theory can have a sense of humor. Any dense phrasing, convoluted argument, or other infelicities the reader might find in this thesis remain despite the best efforts of these kind readers. As a teacher, I would like to thank Matthew Ballance, Barbie Bowling, Chris DuPuis, Amy Skye Dustrude, Todd Hartman, Pattie Mayfield, Jill Mooney, Bert Skillen, Angela Voris, and the rest of my students from whom, I fear, I learned more than I taught.
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The Role(s) of Literature in Introductory Composition Classrooms

Introduction: “Where are We Going, Where Have We Been?”

Reframing a Discussion to Acknowledge Multiple Perspectives of Reading and Writing and More Complex Understandings of “Literature”

The purpose of this thesis is to reframe a discussion concerning whether or not the curricula of introductory composition courses should include literature, a seemingly simple question that has proven a place of active if unfruitful debate since first year writing began in United States universities. For 120 years, debates have ranged over what use literature might serve in introductory composition and have always included varying purposes for first year writing. This thesis charts where the discussion has been, where it is now, and how it might best proceed. Some recent participants have attempted to represent histories of the use of literature in such courses to argue for or against such use, as Erwin Steinberg and Gary Tate do. Others, such as Michael Gamer and Jane Peterson, have suggested that “literature” itself is an ill-defined category. Erika Lindemann claims that arguments for and against literature in introductory composition, arguments concerning the purposes of such courses, must “sort pedagogical arguments from political, historical, and theoretical ones” (288). However, I will demonstrate that efforts to conduct the discussion as apolitical, ahistorical, and atheoretical prevent it from progressing beyond an arrested conflict whose participants cannot seem to understand one another’s perspectives.

This thesis offers a more comprehensive history of literature in first year writing, identifying the theoretical implications of the different views and demonstrating the
historical and political contexts of the perspectives. In mapping that territory, I have generally adopted the terms and definitions used by the participants in the discussion. That is, because "literature" has generally been discussed as an unproblematic category, I generally treat it as such in the first two chapters. Chapter I offers a historical narrative of literature in first year writing from the inception of Harvard's English A in 1874 to recent developments, recognizing how introductory composition has generally been paired as the "low" counterpart to literature's "high" status in English departments. Chapter II addresses a recent point/counterpoint and roundtable discussion in journal of College English that focuses on literature in writing classrooms; the chapter also addresses two subsequent articles. The second chapter foregrounds what have generally been relatively unexamined assumptions made by those forming the discussion. It acknowledges the development of twin theories of reading and writing that intersect in their terminology, and it demonstrates how these tripartite models underscore discontinuities in the contemporary discussion. This chapter concludes that differing views of reading and writing have caused participants to work at cross purposes, while a general failure to sufficiently recognize alternate perspectives has mired the discussion in a conflict of ideas and ideals.

To sort these assumptions and biases, I have adopted the terms of twin theories of writing and reading that have emerged in the past two decades. In Rhetoric and Reality, James Berlin's history of university writing programs in the United States in the twentieth century, he offers a taxonomy of rhetorics: objective, subjective, and transactional. The rhetorics correspond to a focus on the text, the reader, or the social situation that frames the reading, respectively. Berlin's "Rhetoric and Ideology in the
Writing Class” relabels these rhetorics cognitive, expressivist, and social-epistemic, terms that echo what Lester Faigley types as prevalent theories of writing process. Kathleen McCormick adapts the cognitive, expressivist, and social tags of writing process for a tripartite model of reading process. The models' shared terminology invites their comparison. A cognitive model addresses writing as a process of transforming thoughts into language, strategies which are not individual but general; cognitive reading typically treats meaning as fixed and stable within a text. Expressive reading and writing processes assume an authentic individual making meaning with language, and expressive writing reflects the unique self of the author. Social-cultural reading and writing foreground how historical forces constitute text and reader and the relationships between them, and such strategies attempt to both recognize and negotiate among those contingencies. Distinguishing among multiple ways of reading and writing provides one means by which to make sense of the conversation of role(s) of literature in introductory composition, suggesting that pedagogical differences emerge from theoretical ones.

Chapter III shifts in scope and focus from the earlier two chapters. While the first two chart where the discussion has been, and attempt to reframe it based on multiple perspectives of reading and writing, this chapter suggests how the discussion of literature in composition might best develop. It contributes to the discussion by complicating what “literature” might mean and pointing out that identical categories for reading and writing processes suggest a relationship between the two, a relationship whose complexity should be acknowledged to discuss reading in writing courses. This third chapter first draws upon the work of Terry Eagleton, Stanley Fish, and Robert Scholes, critical theorists who have redefined what reading, writing, and literature might be. While none of these three
(except Scholes, and he only obliquely) address first year writing *per se*, their reformulation of the basic components of such a course critically inform what roles literature might play in composition classrooms. Adopting their view of "literature" as a socially constructed and fluid category suggests that how one reads a text changes the meaning—and the "literary-ness"—of that text. Therefore, the question of *what* to read shifts to *how* to read, a distinction Peterson alludes to but does not explore in any detail. McCormick's tripartite model of reading processes, the cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural modes that mirror writing processes, offers a schema of that "how," and I suggest that teachers of first year writing should invite students to practice reading and writing conscious of the various textual strategies available. Finally, Chapter III points out how richer understandings of "literature" and reading and writing process might play out in first year composition courses and includes an account of my own invitation to students to apply literary reading strategies to student writing.

This thesis does not attempt to essentialize or unilaterally privilege any reading or writing mode over the others. However, Chapter III points out that the social-cultural model of process is the only one that accommodates the other two, and this thesis draws from social-cultural reading and writing strategies. Still, cognitive and expressive processes of reading and writing provide useful approaches as well, in particular contexts. The third chapter suggests that the discussion concerning the role(s) of literature in first year writing—so frequently one of crossed purposes—would profit from two amendments. First, the discussion should adopt the more complex understanding of "literature" emerging from critical theory. Second, acknowledging "literary-ness" not as an intrinsic value of a text but a product of a particular reading suggests that we take a
greater account of reading processes, and McCormick’s model of such is persuasive. In describing reading in the same terms as writing, her model attests to a close relationship between the two. While not all teachers and scholars in composition share an identical understanding of reading and writing, this thesis claims that we should agree that the three-part model of cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural discourses describes the terrain—and, because the third of these is the only that adequately describes the other two, it may prove the more complete. Addressing reading and writing in more complex ways invites us to theorize a writing course that has too often been discussed in ways that attempt to divorce it from theoretical, social, cultural, and historical contingencies. Recognizing that history and agreeing on a framework could lead to a more progressive conversation concerning roles of literature in first year writing, and perhaps better articulate the various purposes of such courses in general.
Chapter I: *The More Things Change…*

A Historical Narrative of Literature’s Place in First Year Writing Courses

[There can be little doubt that conflicting ideals, both in aims and methods, are firmly held by many of the leading teachers of English throughout the country.]

William Mead, 1903

From the beginning of English A at Harvard in 1874 to the thirteen articles and responding letters concerning literature and composition published in *College English* between 1993 and 1996, claims concerning the roles of literary texts in first year writing courses have demonstrated that the issue is an active one, with political and epistemological implications extending far beyond the pedagogical question of whether or not students read or write about a poem. Some active in the field of composition have sought to separate the discussion from its political, theoretical, and historical contingencies or have discounted the historical and contemporary presence and relevance of such a discussion. Lindemann, who stakes her position against literature in first year writing classes in *College English* in 1993 and 1995, asserts in her 1995 contribution to the conversation that “[t]hough it is difficult to sort pedagogical arguments from political, historical, and theoretical ones, I intend to focus primarily on instruction” (288). While Lindemann’s impulse to focus on instruction foregrounds her commitment to pedagogy, pedagogical issues such as the reading content and practices of writing courses have since their beginning been implicated in political and theoretical positions.

Other participants in the 1995 *College English* roundtable voice arguments including historical narratives in discussions of literature in composition, though with contradictory purposes. Tate argues that there has been an absence of such discussion in recent decades, even while literature remains a component of many curriculums. He invites a renewing of the conversation, theorizing anew and in more critical ways
possible roles for literature in composition. On the other hand, Erwin Steinberg’s research leads him to conclude that “imaginative literature has not had a secure place in composition classrooms since at least the 1930s . . . . Indeed, I wonder why the argument for the use of literature in the composition classroom reappears from time to time” (271). Tate argues that the practice continues in the absence of theory, while Steinberg sees the reverse. The cross purposes of the conversation seem in part predicated upon different (and in the case of Steinberg and Tate, diametrically opposed) views of a historical role of literature in composition and its present use. As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, literature’s role in first year writing has been steady and steadily contested during its one hundred and twenty year history in United States universities.

When Charles Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909, established the college’s required two semester writing course in 1874, and in the same year introduced a written test of admittance that drew upon the “great works” of English literature for its subject, he began a conversation on what should be read and written by students in such a course. Eliot rewrote three years of college interdisciplinary writing practice into a two semester writing course, English A, taken the sophomore year, a move John Brereton in The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925 cites as the president’s response to an increasingly elective college curriculum, a curriculum no longer structured for the gentleman-scholar but marketed for the expanding middle class of an increasingly industrialized society (10-11). The new elective-based education meant that students no longer followed a sequence of courses with a pattern of writing requirements included throughout the curriculum, so Eliot developed—or rather delegated to Adams Hill, assistant to Boylston Chair Howard Child, to develop—a one year course in writing for second year students. Also in 1874, Eliot added a test of writing to Harvard’s entrance examination, a test requiring students “to write a short English composition, correct in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression, the subject to be taken from such works of standard authors . . . Shakespeare’s Tempest,
Julius Caesar, and Merchant of Venice; Goldsmith’s Vicar of Wakefield; Scott’s Ivanhoe, and Lay of the Minstrel” (34). Applicants were to have “intelligently” read all of the texts upon which they would be tested. When Hill moved the writing requirement to students’ first year in 1885 and instituted a rule that any failing grade for a composition mandated a failure of the course, and when Eliot made it Harvard’s only required course in 1897, English A joined the writing exam in functioning as a gatekeeper for the new university. Together, they barred advancement for those students unfamiliar with canonical works or the culturally validated textual practice of treating reading and writing as the consumption and production of texts. Thus, in its inception, the introductory writing course and its association with literature emerged from and was shaped by social and cultural practices of a class-conscious, increasingly industrialized capitalist economy.

Composition’s association and even reliance upon literature can be seen in Hill’s examinations reprinted by Brereton. The measure of students’ success in introductory composition was in at least in part based upon their reading of required literary texts. Two explications in the mid-year exam are rhetorical analyses of poems, and another section asks for statements of “the literary worth” of an extended passage (441-2). In the final exam for the course, six of eight subject prompts refer to canonical literature, as do four of five questions in the second section of the exam, including “Name the authors we have studied this year” and “Name Miss Austen’s Novels” (444).

Like the final exam for English A, The Harvard entrance exam instituted in 1874 relied upon literature as the subject of composition, and the institution of the test made two implicit arguments. First, it suggested that students entering universities should already have received some of the writing instruction previously administered through three years of college. Teaching writing ceased to be a fundamental responsibility of universities. Second, in offering only canonical works as essay prompts, the entrance exam made literature the subject of writing instruction in the secondary schools that were to prepare students for university education. At the time, Harvard was the United States’
premier undergraduate institution, and other universities followed its lead; some, such as Yale, even went further in making literature the sole subject matter for writing classes. In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, James Berlin offers convincing arguments that universities near the close of the nineteenth century shifted from traditional “elitist” education for doctors, lawyers, and the clergy to “certifying the members of the new professions, professions that an expanding economy had created” (21). Familiarity with canonical literature and privileged language became one means of such certification into the growing middle class, economically grounded in the expanding commercial, “practical” fields.

Other schools treated the university as still the place for a “gentlemanly” education, where writing courses would be for “the few who were gifted” (Berlin 43). Yale’s writing requirement, instituted in 1895, established a required composition course based entirely on literature, and Cornell soon followed (Brereton 160-1). Berlin suggests that their courses reflected an ideology opposite to that of Harvard, an opposition he traces to Glenn Palmer’s 1912 article “Culture and Efficiency through Composition,” with Harvard’s writing course representing efficiency and Yale’s, culture. Berlin cites Palmer’s claim that Harvard sought to “train” students for “the everyday needs of democracy,” while Yale, in “recognizing that there can be no literary production without culture,” hoped to encourage the “few geniuses” (quoted in Berlin 43). Harvard’s utilitarian approach, rather than the other ivy league schools’ “aristocratic and humanistic intentions,” became the norm in the changing economic landscape.

The ideologically and politically circumscribed origins of composition’s yoking with literature have been explored in detail, perhaps most notably in Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality* and Susan Miller’s *Textual Carnivals*. Both recognize that the newly founded writing departments of the nineteenth century turned away from rhetoric to rely upon literature’s increasingly privileged status. Laurence Veysey, in *The Emergence of the American University*, claims that as late as the mid-nineteenth century, “rhetoric and
oratory were often given places in the prescribed curriculum” (38). Berlin cites literature’s emergence and rise and rhetoric’s fall in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one reason leaders of the newly established field of composition allied it with literature (22). In an increasingly elective-based, fragmented, and departmentalized university, administrators divorced writing from the waning star of rhetoric and found themselves without a subject to write about. Thus came its alliance with literature, which Berlin addresses as “becoming the dominant concern of the new English department” (23). Both he and Miller treat those first year courses, like the entrance exam, as gatekeepers and apparatuses of acculturation. That is, Harvard only admitted students familiar with prescribed works and accustomed to writing about those works in particular ways. Students only fulfilled the writing requirement when they demonstrated they could read literature “intelligently” and that they were correct in “expression.” Berlin and Miller also view the exclusionary practice of Harvard and other schools as a means of discriminating against new immigrants—professional advancement through advanced education could only occur in assimilation in the dominant culture’s language of privilege (Berlin 23; Miller 52). Berlin also suggests that collapsing three years of writing study into one year and shifting the burden of instruction to secondary schools with the entrance exam represented an effort on the part of universities to cut costs (23).

Miller departs from Berlin’s claim of the economic utility for restructuring the curriculum and is more explicit in claiming exclusion as the agenda for early writing courses, describing literature and composition as “the united duo of literary ideals and initiation, or indoctrination, that Eliot automatically joined in his plan for a New Harvard” (53 emphasis added). Shifting writing from the early nineteenth century rhetorical practice of public discourse to literary criticism’s rarified and localized status resulted in privatized writing similar to the “daily themes” for which early Harvard was famous. Miller criticizes the latter practice of students recording their personal expressions or reflections because “compositions were reduced to objects of
inconsequentiality” (59). Whether responding in sanctioned ways to authorized texts ordained as “literary” or engaging in personal reflections styled after literature, the two most common writing practices of the original first year programs (and practices that will remain prevalent, as we will see later) bound composition to literature and relegated it to the margins of the public sphere.

The final quarter of the nineteenth century was a time of change for United States universities. Harvard’s required writing course began in 1874, moved from students’ second to first year in 1885, and became the university’s only required course in 1897. During that time, many other major universities across the country responded in kind. These newly initiated programs differed in whether they focused on daily themes, such as Harvard’s, or the literary study Yale emphasized, though even the Harvard course with its “practical” slant required “outside reading in English literature” (Berlin 38). First year writing in these universities varied in their use of canonical texts, though of the eleven program descriptions in Brereton’s documentary history, five explicitly mention their composition courses’ inclusion of literature, and only one, Indiana University, rejects it. The others—Amherst, Yale, Stanford, Iowa, and Berkeley—include literary texts in the classroom, with Yale, Iowa, and Berkeley making it the primary subject of the composition course (Brereton 160-86). If Brereton’s selection of 1895 programs is representative, and the research of both Berlin and Miller suggest it is, then half of first year writing programs in United States’ higher education at the turn of the century made significant use of literature.

The reasons for this were various. Composition was a new program, and when Eliot consolidated three years of co-curricular study into a one year composition course, that course needed a subject if it was to match the increasingly departmentalized, discipline-oriented, elective rather than curricularly integrated “New University.” Berlin claims that newly developed composition programs switched the subject matter from rhetorical study to the study of literature, and the title of his historical narrative, *Rhetoric*
& Reality, foregrounds rhetoric before the “writing instruction” of its sub-title. Miller suggests Berlin writes continuity between rhetoric and composition where there historically was none, as composition courses “were not intended to, and did not, replace earlier rhetorical education” (80). Still, both agree that rhetorical practices informed those of composition even as its importance as a field of study gave way to that of literature in United States universities (in large part as an exclusionary social practice in the “New University,” if we accept the persuasive arguments of Berlin and Miller). One of the most significant reasons for the waning importance of writing instruction was composition’s seeming lack of subject matter and its treatment as an art by Hill, who developed both Harvard’s English A and the first widely used composition textbook, The Principles of Rhetoric and Their Application, published in 1878. Hill claims that writing “is an art, not a science” that has “no subject-matter peculiar to itself” (321). Hill’s adoption of Aristotle’s definition of composition as an “art” marginalized it in an industrial society’s increasing valorization of “practical” sciences. Furthermore, Berlin and Miller describe the decreased role of rhetorical study in composition. Composition thus became “other” both in identification with the “other” of art and in lacking a subject of study. English A became dependent upon two topics for composition: writing about literature and self-expressivist writing, the daily themes.¹

So composition held an odd place in English departments in United States universities at the turn of the century, suspended between rhetoric and literature, fields whose cultural capital was headed in opposite directions. Given the increasing status of English literature and the decline of classical rhetoric, coupled with composition’s status as an art without a subject, instruction in college writing became subordinate to reading. Much of Textual Carnivals reads as Miller’s writing of composition history in terms of literature’s “high” and composition’s “low” positions, privileged theory versus marginalized practice, pleasure versus instruction (53). The role of literature in composition was a troubled one, then, because of the opposition between the two.
Literature courses, occupying the superior position in university hierarchies, could unproblematically appropriate the “low” of composition in requiring students to write about literary works. Students might read texts and write the “reading,” the writing being a wholly secondary practice, simply demonstrating that, in the words of the final exam for English A, the literary texts had been “intelligently read.” However, what is privileged when composition courses include literary texts, the writing or the reading? Composition’s “low” could hardly subordinate the “high”—and if it did not, then what separated it from a literature course? As I will later detail, composition departments responded in several ways to this uneasy dynamic. One reaction within the hierarchy of the two English disciplines has been for those within composition to reject literature and revive rhetoric as the subject of practice. Another response has been for practitioners and theorists to ignore the complex history of institutional politics. Neither approach provides the understanding of the issues at stake that a more comprehensive historical account allows.

A survey of university writing programs conducted by William Mead and published in the PMLA 18 in 1903 demonstrates the difficulty of the problem. The article deals primarily with whether student practice should focus on “writing clearly and concisely” or “the production of literature” (218). The responses address both the potential for student writers to generate literary work and the role of reading “literature.” Conflicting responses on both topics yield inconclusive results concerning the relationship of composition and literature, and the role of the latter in classes of the former. One teacher writes, “The boy [sic] is not to make literature his theme”; another, “No man [sic] can draw the line between composition and literary art” (220-21). Mead’s report closes with this call: “[T]here can be little doubt that conflicting ideals, both in aims and methods, are firmly held by many of the leading teachers of English throughout the country... But, in the interests of educational theory and practice, it is to be hoped that the questions here raised will not be dropped, either here or elsewhere, until they
have been discussed with the thoroughness that their importance demands" (232-33).

Unfortunately, the questions raised were dropped “here” in 1920 when the Modern
Language Association shifted its focus wholly to research and scholarship that excluded
discussion of composition, making explicit what Berlin reads as an exclusion dating to
1905 (33).

Years later, other publications picked up the conversation, when the National
Council for Teachers of English began publishing *College English* in 1939 and *College
Composition and Communication* in 1950. Scholarly discussion concerning the role of
literature in first year writing classes has proven nearly as active as any topic, as
represented in a survey of the two journals’ tables of contents since their beginnings.
During its first 30 years, *CCC* includes seven feature articles on the role of literature in
composition courses each decade, including theme issues on the topic in 1956 and 1964,
and a similar pattern prevails in *College English*. Concern dipped in the eighties, but the
point/counterpoint of Lindemann and Tate in 1993 began the fourteen articles or letters
on the topic published this decade in the two journals. Of those published this decade,
ten have been arguments in favor of using literature in first year writing, with four
against. Mead’s claim of “conflicting ideals . . . aims and methods” has remained an
accurate assessment of theory and practice, apparently, though it remains unclear whether
the questions raised concerning legitimate reading practices in writing courses “have
been discussed with the thoroughness that their importance demands.”

This is not to say that no one has tried. Berlin and Miller each to different
 extents—and with different agendas—provide partial understandings of textual practices
in first year composition courses, and Tate and Steinberg have as well, all with different
results. Berlin engages a few sources to determine that the valorization of literature
primarily reflected nationalistic tendencies of the United States during the 1950s, a rather
abstract discussion of the social and historical contingencies of the scholarly arguments
concerning literature in first year writing. Miller turns instead to catalogues of actual
course offerings at fifteen large and geographically various universities between 1920 and 1960, determining that introductory writing courses increasingly relied upon literature. Berlin, to Tate’s reading, proceeds “at a fairly high level of generalization and his arguments were supported by references to four journal articles, a letter, and an MLA document” (“Notes” 303). Tate counters what he considers to be a limited survey with his own review of the reports of the annual CCCC, published in CCC from 1950 to 1974, and finds that literature began to disappear from scholarly discussion in the 1950s. Steinberg, on the other hand, draws primarily upon Albert Kitzhaber’s *Themes, Theories, and Therapy* and four *CCC* survey articles to reach his conclusion that “literature has not had a secure place in composition classrooms since at least the 1930s” (271). All engage in different methods of surveying overlapping periods of composition history, and all arrive at vastly different conclusions. Sketching these diverse and sometimes contradictory “readings” of literature in composition proves valuable because they contrast sharply with attempts to “reinvent the wheel,” to turn a blind eye to a complex history of almost a century and a quarter of first year writing.

However, before taking a closer look at the historical research of Berlin, Miller, Tate, and Steinberg, respectively, all of which deals primarily with the latter half of the twentieth century, there remains several important surveys of introductory composition from the 1920s. These empirical studies prove valuable because they represent a broad account of actual classroom practices, of what was read in writing classes, something missing from much of the hypothesizing (and sometimes posturing) elsewhere in the discussion. The Shipherd and Taylor surveys of 1926 and 1928 fill the gap between Mead’s claims at the turn of the century and the research of documents generally dating since the fifties. More importantly, they reflect the scope of literature in composition classrooms, a scope found to include roughly one class in five, a proportion that has remained constant since—which belies some claims that literary texts have vanished from writing curriculums.
H. Robinson Shipherd surveyed 75 introductory writing programs in 1926. His survey was geographically diverse but included relatively more Northeast responses than other areas, and thus reflected the legacies of both the "liberal culture schools," such as Yale, and the supposedly utilitarian approach of Harvard, the latter from which Shipherd had graduated. All of the courses employed at least some literature, and 55 percent involved more than 2000 pages of reading a year (Berlin 61); as the average writing requirement was 120 pages, reading outnumbered writing in the majority of courses by more than sixteen printed pages read to one penned.

Warner Taylor conducted wider surveys in the two years following Shipherd, covering three times as many universities, achieving a more evenly distributed geographic sample, and representing over 100,000 first year writers. Taylor introduces his results with a description of the field very similar to Mead: "There is unquestionably, if not a spirit of unrest over Freshman English throughout the country, at least a spirit of inquiry" (546). The lack of a clear master narrative for first year writing reportedly present in 1903 had not changed in the ensuing quarter century. The second section of the survey results, "Literature in Freshman English," reports that 94 of 225 universities—over forty percent—used some literature in first year composition, with a third of such courses including literature as half or more of the curriculum (552). The more geographically representative results of Taylor's survey de-emphasize Shipherd's Northeast-weighted results ("liberal culture" elite universities, requiring extensive reading), though literature still remains in many programs. Taylor also includes some theoretically significant observations and claims when he recognizes the problematic nature of both defining literature and differentiating among purposes of its use in composition courses:

At best literature is an elusive term... what of the omnipresent essay and short story? Both are literature, of course, if their quality be high enough. The trouble lies in the use made of them. If they are studied from a rhetorical standpoint, dissected for unity, emphasis, and coherence, —if, to
put it differently, they are employed as models and stimuli for themes, *they become a means to an end and lose their significance as pure literature.*” (552—emphasis added)

When Taylor recognizes the difficulty in distinguishing between literary and non-literary texts, he makes a qualification that many others had sidestepped, and if the unproblematic treatment of literary-ness in recent articles is an indication, an elusiveness many continue to avoid or ignore, as I will discuss in greater detail in the following two chapters. The second claim in the passage cited above articulates an argument grounded in modernist opposition of the aesthetic and the utilitarian, essentially emerging from Oscar Wilde’s “All art is completely useless.” A rhetorical approach to a literary text de-signifies its literary-ness, in Taylor’s view, and while his argument of “pure literature” has lost favor in post-structuralist understanding of “texts” and a resurgence in rhetoric (see Berlin 165-66), it does draw attention to the multiple trajectories an act of reading may involve. That is, writing may move away from “stimuli” of texts or move towards them as “models”; both practices, however, subordinate reading in treating it as a means, a utility, the opposite of modernist conceptions of literature.

What happened after Taylor’s survey? Berlin posits one reading of that time, claiming that writing teachers increasingly argued for an English course based on “what [they] knew best—the literary text” (108), an argument made since the close of the nineteenth century. Berlin draws upon CCC and MLA documents of the fifties to claim that literature was to foster growth of the individual spirit and democratic ideals—rhetoric he attributes to Cold War inspired fear of communism (109, 111). However, Berlin’s historical narrative has received criticism from both Miller and Tate for what they view as the limited relevance of its sources. Miller claims that whereas Berlin draws upon evidence of “philosophical bases of instruction,” she constructs her reading from an assembly of course catalogues to assemble a “print ethnography” of institution’s authorization of language, hierarchies that made composition classes “vividly aware of
the enormous difference between student writing and that of the (doubly meant) ‘masters’” (66-7).

Miller’s reading supports her understanding of the high/low pairing of literature and composition, and of the extent to which employing literature in composition reinforced that hierarchy in twentieth century universities’ most frequent offering. She addresses the transformation composition programs experienced at Berkeley as representative of change in such programs in general. In the 1920s, Berkeley offered many different writing courses with a variety of subject matters, ranging from “Business Practice” to essay and poetry writing to classes based in literary study. By 1960, literature courses at Berkeley had increased in number and diversity, while the variety of introductory writing courses collapsed into two offerings, both depending upon literature. “The change that occurred at Berkeley, as it did at many other schools, was not so much to reduce the appearance of numbers of writing courses as it was to increasingly identify introductory writing courses with the result of reading ‘important’ literature” (68).

Miller’s plotting of composition’s narrative casts it as subordinate, literature’s “other,” bound to it by subject matter and relegated to an introductory offering.

Like Miller, Tate also criticizes Berlin’s narrative, more for its limited sources than its focus on particular social and historical contingencies binding composition’s use of literature to a particular political climate. In constructing his narrative from reports of CCCC workshops published from 1950 to 1974, Tate in “Notes on a Dying Conversation” writes a history that calls attention to literature written about by students in composition classrooms but not in theoretical discussion of those classrooms. He cites Richard Larsen’s recent survey of first year writing program as revealing that twenty percent of such courses “have some literary component. Interestingly, this is exactly the same number, one in five, determined by Albert Kitzhaber in his 1959-60 survey” (304); it is also the same percentage reporting literature’s presence in at least a quarter of the composition curriculum in the 1927-28 Taylor survey. However, while classrooms may
have maintained the practice, theory supporting that practice had diminished, at least according to the CCCC notes. Early claims are clearly suspect as uninformed pedagogy, as a report from a workshop at one conference attests: composition classes should treat literature as their subject because that is what “English teachers are most familiar with” (quoted in “Notes” 304). It is not surprising that such ad hoc reasoning did not last long in theorizing such courses, but no theorizing appeared to replace it. Writing’s status as an art without a subject matter subordinated it to whatever discipline with which its teachers were best acquainted, and composition’s historical place in the English department made that subject literature. However, composition’s traditionally remedial and utilitarian role made some resist associating it with the rarified world of literature. One participant of a 1963 workshop gave the vehement warning “against prostituting literature for the development of writing skills” (quoted 305—emphasis added), perversely illustrating Miller’s claim of composition’s “low” status to literature’s “high.” Tate’s research makes clear both the unresolved conflict of literature in introductory writing courses and the inability of those in favor of such an arrangement to successfully articulate a theoretical basis for their pedagogical practice. One CCCC report describes how a 1955 workshop “sailed into a storm of dispute and controversy in discussing the relative merits of imaginative and expository writing as reading in the course,” a dispute that thirteen years later remained “frustrating” (306). Tate also describes how numerous conference panels could only weakly argue that literature would “somehow” improve student writing. “Notes on a Dying Conversation” ends with Tate’s call for those in favor of literature in composition to rewrite “somehow” into viable and critical pedagogical approaches:

It is apparent, I think, that the conversation about literature in freshman composition was dying, that no new insights were present to invigorate the discussion . . . For those of us who continue to believe that literature should not be barred from the freshman course and that the issues
surrounding its use should still play a role in our disciplinary discussions, the failures of the past must inform us and warn us as we attempt to begin the conversation anew.” (308)

Steinberg resists the beginning of such a new conversation, claiming “imaginative literature has not had a secure place in composition classrooms since at least the 1930s . . . Indeed, I wonder why the argument for the use of literature in the composition classroom reappears from time to time” (271). He draws primarily upon Albert Kitzhaber’s *Themes, Theories, and Therapy* and four CCC survey articles to reach his conclusion. However, Steinberg’s own evidence doesn’t entirely support his argument, as Kitzhaber’s survey that revealed twenty percent of courses in 1959-60 used literature appeared in the same text he cites, the same proportions revealed in the Taylor survey three decades before and the Larsen survey three decades later. Indeed, the use of literature has historically proven more “secure” than other features of first year writing programs (the daily themes, for example, collected and copiously marked)—or perhaps secure is not so much the case as lasting. Harvard’s original move to consolidate three years of university writing to one year joined the institution of the written entrance exam as a combined effort to label college writing remedial, shifting the responsibility to high schools. In effect, many universities have been attempting to abolish introductory composition since it began in 1874.

Which leaves us where? Tate asks those composition teachers using literature in the classroom—one out of five, according to the surveys of the twenties, sixties, and nineties—to make their voices heard in a conversation rather than play a silent, marginalized role within a field already historically identified as a disempowered “other.” Other narratives do not unequivocally support the claim of silence, however. While
CCC's number of feature articles exploring possible roles of literature in composition dipped in the eighties and nineties, they never completely disappeared. The case for theoretical silence is even slighter in College English, considering the echoes caused by the 1993 point/counterpoint of Lindemann and Tate. Difficulties face any attempt to construct the master narrative of composition because of the multiple and partially conflicting accounts of first year writing, of which even a partial account includes: Kitzhaber's syllabi; Kitzhaber's, Shipherd's, and Taylor's various survey responses from teachers; Miller's course catalogues; Tate's conference reports; numerous journal articles and several book-length histories addressing first year writing. In short, there is no definite narrative and thus no definite article. There can no more be the narrative than there can be the writing course. Steinberg points this out in the first page of his article—"There is no such thing as the composition classroom" (266)—a move against totalizing that many could well make. However, Steinberg is not the first to point this out, not even the first in College English. Frederic Reeve makes this clear in the first page of his 1949 article "One View of Freshman English" when he describes "the philosophy, nature, and methods of a (not the) freshman English course" (his italics). Perhaps everyone can benefit from a little history—or, as the following chapter shall address in applying Jean-Francois Lyotard's work, a petit narrative.

I have sought to tell a story of introductory composition, and my purposes for doing this have been several. First, even the brief attention I have paid to attempting a partial and particular history of first year writing testifies to what I see as a complex tradition of pedagogical practice worth investigating in its own right. Second, that complexity has informed the current conversation of roles literature should or should not
play in ways that would be better addressed than ignored. Ignoring history has allowed it to repeat itself, as illustrated in Mead’s description of “conflicting ideals” continuing to typify the debate and Steinberg’s unconscious echo of Reeve. In my account of where first year writing has been with respect to literature, I have attempted to chart the complexity of the issue, to more richly theorize rather than generalize, and to account for how institutional and political power structures led to introductory composition’s early reliance upon literary texts, and later, to arguments against such use. I have hoped to show that decisions of what appears on syllabi of what probably remains the most frequently taught course at United States universities is a pedagogical question deeply and inextricably implicated in theoretical, institutional, and historical questions. Formulating answers for the latter questions may help us develop answers for the first one.
Chapter II: . . . The More They Stay the Same.

Recognizing Paradigmatic Differences Concerning Literature in Composition

The previous chapter offers a diachronic view of roles literature has played in composition, and this chapter provides a synchronic perspective. This approach proves particularly valuable when we recognize that encoded within the recent and variously adverse understandings of roles literature might or might not play in writing classrooms lie the paradigmatic differences concerning reading and writing that keep the conversation in a sort of crisis-ridden stasis. The two preceding statements relate more clearly when one adopts a Saussurean understanding of the implications of diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Using an example from botany to address the nature of understanding language, Ferdinand de Saussure writes,

If the stem of a plant is cut transversely, a rather complicated design is formed by the cut surface; the design is simply one perspective of the longitudinal fibers, and we would be able to see them on making a second cut perpendicular to the first. Here again one perspective depends on the other; the longitudinal cut shows the fibers that constitute the plant, and the transversal cut shows their arrangement on a particular plane; but the second is distinct from the first because it brings out certain relations between the fibers—relations that we could never grasp by viewing the longitudinal plane. (113)

The prior chapter has attempted an examination of the "longitudinal fibers," the roles literature has played in first year composition courses through time, and how that history "constitute[s]" introductory composition in relation to literature. This chapter is the "second cut," the attempt to map "certain relations between the fibers," the strands that have emerged in the conversation of reading in writing courses. In summarizing and critiquing the arguments of the past five years, I have two purposes. First, I hope to on
one hand contextualize recent discussion within the history given in the previous chapter. Second, and at greater length, I will demonstrate how different understandings of what roles literature should or should not play in composition have been underscored by different theoretical allegiances among the participants. Insufficient acknowledgment of those allegiances has limited the progress of the discussion, a limitation I hope to alleviate in “show[ing] their arrangement” and “bring[ing] out certain relations.” To do so, I have adopted twin models of reading and writing as cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural processes. Lastly, I hope to trace the relationships among participants in the conversation and place them within a wider critical framework. *College English* apparently encouraged a fairly informal discussion of literature in composition, considering the relatively brief length of both the 1993 and 1995 contributions and the few number of sources for them. A more comprehensive account reveals the complexity of the issue.

Gary Tate closed his 1995 contribution to the *College English* with the call for those using literature in composition courses to articulate their reasons for doing so, a call met at its utterance with Michael Gamer’s entry in the conversation in the same issue. Since then, David Foster and Mariolina Salvatori have joined, with essays in *College English* and *College Composition and Communication*, respectively. Salvatori, in “Conversations with Texts: Reading in the Teaching of Composition,” argues for a theory and praxis of reading that makes room for literature in writing classrooms, and Foster offers such a class as case study in “Reading(s) in the Writing Classroom.” The appearance of these two essays brings the sum of articles and letters in composition’s hallmark publications concerning literature in first year writing courses to fourteen in the
past seven years—a sizeable number, indicating an importance that belies Erwin Steinberg’s questioning the re-emergence of such a discourse (271). However, before moving on to the most recent entries in the conversation, it would help to take a closer look at how articles in *College English* in 1993 and 1995 invoked the debate anew, because the discourse of the first debate and the subsequent roundtable in many ways resemble the “conflicting ideals” of almost a century before. Perhaps the question is not so much whether first year writing should engage literature, but why the conversation has not really proved productive.

**Lindemann and Tate: Whether Literature is “to be or not to be” in First Year Writing**

Lindemann and Tate, friends and co-editors of *An Introduction to Composition Studies*, in 1993 debated literature’s role in first year writing in a *College English* point/counterpoint. Their two essays, discussed briefly in the previous chapter, reopen what Tate then claimed to be a subject long dormant in scholarly conversation. Lindemann’s “Freshman Composition: No Place For Literature” and Tate’s “A Place for Literature in Composition” each approach literature’s “place” with the same question, albeit with very different answers: what is first year writing for? Lindemann argues such courses train students in writing within their disciplines, while Tate calls for practices that explore a humanistic world not circumscribed by academic departments. This section will explore their arguments and demonstrate their relationship to one another and their position within a wider critical framework. Lindemann’s claims undergo a more rigorous evaluation, even though her 1995 contribution to the conversation sorts different perspectives with the same schema adopted by this thesis: cognitive, expressive, and
social-cultural perspectives of discourse. However, she seems to do so in ways that cloud
the issue rather than clarify, insufficiently recognizing the embeddedness of her claims
within the history and theory she seeks to ignore. What I perceive as a lack of self-
reflexivity seems particularly disingenuous, considering that social-cultural perspective
of discourse she seems to advocate typically foregrounds the very concerns she ignores.

Lindemann proposes in “No Place” a six-part argument for abandoning literature
in first year writing: 1) reading emphasizes product, while a writing workshop focuses
on process; 2) attention to literature shifts the emphasis from the production to the
consumption of writing; 3) literary criticism is too abstruse a model for students to
imitate; 4) recognizing literary conventions in texts does less to instruct students in
practices of college writing than does engaging multiple disciplines’ conventions, and
critical theory does not need literature to be employed in classrooms; 5) literary
criticism’s epistemology does not necessarily overlap with those of other disciplines; 6)
and finally, writing classes should not serve as practice in pedagogy for future teachers of
literature (313-15). Lindemann’s model writing class focuses on student writing rather
than on literature, and the professional texts it does engage are those of the academic
disciplines for which her class ostensibly prepares students. For her, introductory
composition is a service course, serving students by preparing them for college writing
and serving the university by standardizing the skills departments can anticipate their
students possessing. She argues that engagement of and presumed participation in such
academic discourse communities fosters an active education, “not mere skills courses or
training for the professions students may enter five years later” (312). Elsewhere,
however, Lindemann endorses writing’s economic utility. In her introductory text for
writing instruction, *A Rhetoric For Writing Teachers*, Lindemann locates her first defense of writing as power in its capital value in the business world(s), describing writing as “an essential professional skill” (5).

However, teaching writing as “an essential professional skill” can easily become teaching writing as *essentially* a professional skill. As Tate cautions in “A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition,” “The analogy between shaping [writing students] into good, obedient workers in the academy and shaping them to be good, obedient workers in the world beyond the academy is obvious” (320). What is obvious to Tate is the social nature of writing; adopting conventions of academic discourses means a socialization of obedience and thus subordination. That is, writing strictly within the disciplines can itself discipline, constraining students by constructing them as subject to academic discourse before they can become subjects participating in it. Instead of primarily introducing students to such conventions, as Lindemann argues writing courses should, Tate instead recognizes students “as people whose most important conversations will take place *outside the academy*” (320). He offers a litany of just what that extra-academic world might involve: struggle, voting, love, survival, change, diversity, death, oppression, and freedom. Tate does not argue that writing instructors should transform composition classes into introductory courses in literature, and he claims that students should read and write to and from more than only “imaginative literature.” However, in pursuit of establishing “private and public lives,” if literature helps, so be it.

Even this brief examination of how Lindemann and Tate each chart their versions of a first year writing course demonstrates that their differences over literature in composition have as much to do with divergent understandings of the purposes of writing
as contrasting views of reading. In addition, each constructs pedagogy very differently. Lindemann writes, “Freshman English offers guided practice in reading and writing the discourse of the academy and the professions. That is what our colleagues across the campus want it to do; that is what it should do if we are going to drag every first-year student through the requirement” (312). Aside from the clever rhetorical strategy of describing first year writing in the absolute, as what it is rather than what she wishes it to be,² Lindemann here suggests a subordinate position for writing within university curriculums. That is, first year writing should primarily serve the interests of other departments and prepare students for careers in the professions, a utilitarian approach echoing that of Harvard’s original English A. Where Harvard’s literature-based course inducted students into the “appropriate” discourse and established literary works of a middle class of increasingly industrial and urban cityscapes, Lindemann’s model class prepares students for entry into the business practices of that middle class. “Employees create . . . adverse impressions on the job if responses to memos, notes left for secretaries, and brief reports written for supervisors are confusing. The ability to write well still creates economic power” (A Rhetoric 4). She identifies this purpose of writing before she engages any humanistic perspective (7), a perspective Tate associates with literature.

Tate embraces the engagement of a humanistic perspective as a primary objective of first year writing courses, and views students’ most important discourse occurring outside classrooms. In privileging students’ extra-academic lives, he reverses the subordination entailed in engaging the discourses of university disciplines. That is, he challenges Lindemann’s view that introductory composition primarily prepares students to write within their various majors, adopting academic discourses. He cites such
conversations as “restricted, artificial, irrelevant” and rejects viewing students foremost as “history majors, accounting majors, nursing majors” (320). In effect, Tate’s distrust of academic discourses seems a rejection of the “disciplines” they represent, in both the noun and verb uses of the word. University disciplines are the majors constructed by the professions for which they train, if history, accounting, and nursing majors are to go on to become historians, accountants, and nurses. And in the related verb form, academic discourses discipline students in a Foucauldian understanding of the term:

The chief function of the disciplinary power is to ‘train’... it separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units. It “trains” the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements... Discipline makes individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise.” (Foucault 170)

Tate rejects the foregrounding of academic discourses in introductory composition because such focus disciplines students in ways that abandon the “struggle to figure out how to live their lives.” He opts against writing classrooms as locations of discipline, of training, practices that transform students into “good, obedient workers” in college and in the work force (“A Place” 320). As Foucault suggests, such discipline constructs individual students as subject to the power represented by academic discourse, subjects acted upon rather than subjects enacting. Tate argues against first year writing as a place of such discipline. Instead, first year college writing should, in Tate’s view, aid students in exploring the struggle of the contact zones of “public and private lives.” Of course, Foucault’s conception of identity diverges from Tate’s claim for individuality and personal voice that he claims alternate pedagogical practices can foster rather than
suppress. Tate never quite fully articulates just how “public and private lives” are reconciled, or just what constitutes a “private” life. Also, it is possible—even necessary—that expressivist practices supposedly recognizing authentic individuality merely institute more insidious disciplining, in that they claim to be liberatory even as they suppress (see Alan France’s “Assigning Places”).

Of particular interest in Tate’s understanding is its reversal of Miller’s claim of literature and composition as practices of subjugation. Tate describes the training and indoctrination that occurs when academic discourse makes writing a place of “discipline.” However, in Textual Carnivals, Miller constructs a historical narrative describing literature’s supplanting rhetoric in turn of the century composition classes as “initiation, or indoctrination” (53). Tate offers the reverse reading in his focus on more recent history. He emphasizes the absence of critical conversation concerning literature since the seventies and a movement towards academic discourse, which he sees as “shaping and fitting students” in “oppressive” ways (320). For Miller, literature can function as an instrument of hegemony in the writing classroom; Tate argues that abandoning literature can result in the same oppression and discipline.

Between Miller and Tate, the outlook of introductory composition seems a particularly bleak one. For Miller, reading literature circumscribes student subjects within pre-determined middle class roles; for Tate, engaging the discipline(s) of academic discourses similarly makes students subjects to action rather than subjects of action. Miller does not see Tate’s advocacy of expressive discourse as an alternative, in that she believes that such writing—Harvard’s daily themes, for example—can privatize discourse to the point of inconsequentiality. Miller and Tate ally themselves with
separate theories of discourse and make different assumptions as to what reading, writing, and introductory composition are and are for. A primary effort of this chapter is to offer a model of discourse processes that—as a diachronic perspective should—maps concurrent and competing understandings in relation to one another. This particular “slice” of the conversation offers one means by which to do so, a model representing multiple discourses: the cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural views of discourse implicit in Lindemann’s 1995 contribution to the discussion.

Lindemann offers a possibility of paradigmatic differences among teachers of first year writing in “Three Views of English 101.” She describes views of writing as a static particle, a dynamic wave, or a field or network, a triad offered in Rhetoric: Discovery and Change by Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike. She reads those views as presenting writing as “a product, a process, or a system of social actions,” and she claims that each perspective offers a paradigm of writing that, for those who engage it, will seem to offer a complete view but in fact only partially represents acts of composition (289). Writing as product emphasizes reading, is generally text-centered, and is in her view the practice of literature-based composition courses (291). Writing as process she describes as “expressivist” pedagogy, student-centered, and emphasizing each writer’s own unique and personal strategies for problem-solving through numerous drafts (293-4). Writing as system defines writing as a socially contingent cultural practice of meaning made between author and audience embedded in a discourse community (296). Lindemann claims not to argue here for any one of the three views in particular, though she presumably occupies the system’s camp: its portion is nearly half again as long as the other two, and its emphasis of reading and writing within academic
discourses most closely matches her views as expressed in her 1993 essay ("No Place"). She does not overtly claim that a grand unified view of writing is possible, and rather offers the possibility of "collective attention" to divergent practices in order to recognize "common ground" (301). At the very close of her article, however, Lindemann's rhetoric does imply a move toward totalization. She writes of "the collective wisdom of a local as well as national professional community" and withholds her own evaluation for "judgments I believe we should make collectively." For Lindemann, some final evaluation is possible, some total understanding available for composition's own discourse communities. Lindemann's description of the "Three Views" proves problematic in that it claims objectivity even as it is sway to the unacknowledged biases which guide it.

Lindemann calls for collective judgment in composition, a master narrative which seems at odds with some aspects of critical theory. For another theorist, the discrepancy might not be noteworthy, but it seems important here for two reasons. In her 1993 essay, Lindemann identifies some value of critical theory in teaching writing, and her 1995 contribution draws from the language of the sciences in describing composition's epistemology. Since Jean-Francois Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge is an oft-cited text of critical theory that explores epistemological changes in the sciences, it seems relevant here. In a work perhaps best known for its description of postmodernism, Lyotard distinguishes between modern and postmodern eras primarily upon their trust in grand and petite narratives, respectively. He characterizes postmodernism as distrustful of grand or master narratives and subsequently relying upon petite narratives (60). Lyotard's description of postmodernism has proven widely
accepted, in composition theory and elsewhere. For example, his understanding underlies much of Xin Liu Gale's *Teachers, Discourses, and Authority in the Postmodern Composition Classroom*. As part of her exploration of authority represented in texts by “cognitivists, expressivists, and social constructivists,” Gale cites *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*—the text from which Lindemann appropriates her model of writing theories—as offering one “master narrative” (126). As Lyotard associates postmodernism with that which is distrustful of master narratives, Gale’s claim undermines the efficacy of Lindemann’s argument.

Of course, the same critique could be made of this thesis; it, after all, advocates a direction I think would prove progressive, a movement toward more richly theorizing and historicizing composition, and literature’s place in it. I even adopt the same “master narrative” as Lindemann in mapping the territory with the terms cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural. I only hope to avoid being subject to the very criticism I make by attempting to situate my claims within a larger, more complex theoretical framework, making more clear the limits of my claims. Certainly this thesis implies allegiance with a social-cultural writing process in so heavily foregrounding social and cultural relationships, particularly in the first chapter. However, Lindemann’s view of the three processes finally proves too narrow, as I will show in my further critique of her claims.

Lyotard’s critical work intersects with what is at stake in composition in several critical places, including Lindemann’s arguments. First, the rejection of master narratives calls into question the collective judgments Lindemann advocates at the close of “Three Views of Composition.” Second, other aspects of “the postmodern condition” resemble a perspective very similar to the social constructivism implied in Lindemann’s own
apparent position, that of viewing writing as a system. Possibly, the ecological model, the "system of systems" perspective, might be incompatible with the totalizing move she makes. That is, social constructions may be as various as the societies that construct, a pluralism that would resist essentializing any singular collective judgment.

Finally, Lyotard's claims intersect with the issues at stake in the problematic relationship between composition and literature in one more important way, and the complex intersection occurs in a context that includes aspects of history raised in the previous chapter. In the forward to *The Postmodern Condition*, Fredric Jameson identifies Lyotard as following a path "opened up by theorists like Thomas Kuhn" (vii). Of course, Kuhn's work frequently has been cited as informing contemporary composition theory. Tate mentions him in the opening of his 1993 article, and there is Maxine Hairston's landmark "The Wings of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." Indeed, Hairston's use of Kuhn resembles Lindemann's employment of Young, Becker, and Pike's particle, wave, field model as comparable attempts to engage the language of applied sciences to describe composition theory. Such an association reverses early Harvard administrator Adams Hill's 1878 description of writing as "art, not a science" (321), reflecting social and historical contingencies of an industrialized capitalist economy. One potential outcome of that reversal is that those identifying writing with science might conversely abandon the view of writing as art and thus eschew literature, as Lindemann does in "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature."
Cognitive, Expressive, and Social-Cultural Perspectives of Reading and Writing

The mention of Lindemann’s 1993 article marks a good time to return to a closer look at the six arguments Lindemann proposes against the use of literature in her 1993 essay. Addressing those arguments involves not just different views of writing held by participants in the discussion of literature in composition, but contrasting views of reading as well. Addressing them in reverse order will leave her first claim for last, as it invokes the lengthiest response. Her last argument is that writing classes should not serve as practice for future literature teachers—a reasonable argument, if writing classes are to focus on teaching writing rather than learning to teach literature. However, a student-centered writing classroom does not preclude reading “literature” as part of its curriculum if the focus is student response to the reading. Students could grapple with what a text might mean, express their reaction to it, or exploring how the text or their reaction are mediated by social conventions. None of these writing practices necessarily or primarily foreground practice for future literature teachers, which is Lindemann’s final argument against the use of literary texts. Taken together, her third, fourth, and fifth arguments emphasize the extent to which literary criticism’s epistemology does not inform those of other academic discourses. Lindemann’s argument would be persuasive if New Criticism were the only approach to literature. However, a rhetorical approach to literature could fit with Lindemann’s own model for first year writing, itself founded on an understanding of classical rhetoric (*A Rhetoric Chapter II*). Her second argument claims that a focus on literature in first year writing incorrectly shifts the emphasis from the production to the consumption of texts. However, the various academic discourses Lindemann views as the appropriate field of study for first year writing presumably
would be less familiar to many students than the literature they have probably already studied in high school. That is, not having already read within their academic field, students would require extensive reading in that discipline. One could hardly write like a physicist without first reading the work of physicists.

It is probably clear that I have reservations concerning the efficacy of Lindemann's argument. Some of these reservations emerge from the rather expansive vision Lindemann has of teachers of first year writing, whose classes she claims should "provide opportunities to master the genres, styles, audiences, and purposes of college writing" (312). Furthermore, such instructors guide students' "practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions." Lindemann writes as if the 1987 Wyoming Resolution has been fully embraced and enacted, as if all courses were taught by experienced, practiced professors with a reasonable course load, rather than graduate students and underpaid, overworked interim instructors. While Lindemann allies her position privileging academic discourse with a social view of writing, a perspective that foregrounds historical situation, her claims of what introductory composition courses should do ignores the social and historical contingencies of their staffing. Also, as Tate makes clear, it is difficult to imagine any writing teacher, tenured or otherwise, prepared to offer "opportunities" or "guided practice" in all of the discursive practices of all of the various academic fields and professions.

The previous counters to Lindemann's argument are primarily materialist, grounded in the situations of writing classrooms and of those classrooms as part of larger universities. My primary objection is theoretical. Lindemann's first reason for disregarding literature in composition classes lies in what she views as an emphasis on
product rather than process. To Lindemann, reading literature in a writing class emphasizes product, while a writing workshop focuses on processes of writing. Others, however, have questioned this assumption of reading. In *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English*, Kathleen McCormick argues not only for reading as process but offers three models of such processes: the cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural modes of reading. The first treats reading as “information-processing,” accessing the meaning contained in a text. Within a rhetorical model of communication consisting of audience, writer, and text within an environment, the cognitive reading mode asserts the primacy of the meaning of the text. A view of reading as primarily expressive assumes that the meaning of texts are made by their readers, emphasizing the audience of the text read, a perspective associated with reader response theory, which will be dealt with more closely in the following chapter. The final mode of reading, the social-cultural, views texts and readers as embedded in and constructed by social structures, by their material and historical environments (13-14). McCormick traces these three views of reading to James Berlin’s “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class,” though the same categories appear in Berlin’s earlier *Rhetoric and Reality* as a taxonomy for his historical narrative. Actually, McCormick’s tripartite model predates Berlin’s use as well, as Lester Faigley uses the three terms to describe writing processes in “Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal.”

What roles literature might or might not play in first year composition immediately and automatically implicates both reading (whether literature or not-literature) and writing. That is, questions of what to read must involve questions of how to read. Those that treat reading as a universal and independent from context assume
reading to be a cognitive act, accessing information embedded in texts. Arguments that fail to adequately theorize reading and writing elide the complexity of the discussion, particularly the relationship between the textual practices of reading and writing. Again, my goal in this chapter is to incorporate the discussion of literature in composition within larger critical frameworks concurrent to but ignored by the conversation appearing in College English in 1993 and 1995.

Considering arguments posed by theorists such as Roland Barthes and Stanley Fish in the seventies and eighties concerning the essential connectedness of reading and writing, it is perhaps not surprising that reading models might "read" as similar to existing models of writing. That is, if reading and writing are both activities of making meaning with language, then descriptions of each textual practice could very well appear as similar. The complex relationship of reading and writing, and the mirroring between models describing each, provides a critical tool in better understanding the conflicting ideals of composition theorists. As Lindemann suggests in "Three Views of English 101," multiple perspectives of writing prevent participants in the conversation concerning literature in first year writing from making sense of their differences. However, while Lindemann identifies paradigmatic differences between theories of writing, there are also the multiple ways of reading described by McCormick. The conversation of the roles that literature might or might not play in composition is a matter of reading in writing classrooms. Twin models of reading and writing in cognitive/expressive/social-cultural terms perhaps best sorts differences among those in the discussion. Focusing on more complex understandings of reading, writing, and literature clarifies possible roles the latter might play in first year writing classes.
Before moving on to map that terrain, it would prove useful to both look back and see where we have already been and address how the conflicting ideals of the contemporary debate emerge from disparate understandings of reading and writing practices. Lindemann and Tate each approach literature’s role in composition by first describing their distinct understandings of the purpose of first year writing. Lindemann’s argument for training in academic discourses makes writing essentially a professional skill, though she recognizes that such a view represents one of several distinct perspectives of writing. She identifies hers as the social perspective, the other two being student-centered, expressivist discourse and writing as a product to be consumed as subject matter. One the other hand, Tate calls for writing practices that explore a humanistic world described in literature and defined by more than academic departments. Lindemann and Tate thus have divergent understandings of the purposes of writing and contrasting views of what should be read, though neither adequately represents their different models of reading. According to Lindemann, students will need to read within the disciplines to successfully write within them, recognizing and employing the features of such discourses. Tate feels such practice threatens students’ individuality, and his description of “disciplined” writing echoes Foucault’s sense of the term, though, again, Tate’s conception of individual identity differs sharply from Foucault’s. Lindemann recognizes the multiple perspectives of writing at play in the conversation, but not those of reading. Her own treatment of reading matches with McCormick’s cognitive model of reading, emphasizing reading as processing information, accessing and reproducing different fields’ forms of discourse. Tate’s view of reading addresses students “as individual human beings” (321), the unique readers of the expressivist model.
Both Tate and Lindemann end their 1995 essays in *College English* with calls for further discussion concerning potential roles for literature in composition. Tate makes his own position clear at the close of his article. He favors literature in composition classes and invites those of like opinion to advocate reasons for doing so that recognize historical and theoretical contingencies. Lindemann offers a similar invitation, asking writing teachers to take part in a conversation that extends beyond roles of literature in writing classrooms to explore related questions concerning the purposes of introductory composition itself. She writes, “Our differences [in using literature in composition and in the purposes of composition instruction] may help us redefine those instructional practices that we, as a community of English 101 teachers, find essential to our work” (301). She invokes “community” or its variants “collective” or “common ground” seven times in the last page, again reiterating her commitment to the social perspective even as she claims to have avoided “substituting my preference for judgments I believe we should make collectively.” More explicitly, just before she claims to have sidestepped advocating either product, process, or social perspective of writing, she argues that teaching writing cannot rely on expressivist methodologies. “Because each writing teacher approaches his or her initiation into the profession individually, uniquely, each eventually comes to believe that ‘whatever works for me and my students is best.’ But such self-expressive assertions ignore the larger institutional and professional culture that in fact also has shaped our understanding of what it means to teach English 101 well” (301 emphasis added). Lindemann seems intent on constructing an “objective,” scientific viewpoint for her position, claiming to identify perspectives without advocating a particular one. Her efforts in drawing attention to paradigmatic differences in
conversations concerning literature in composition are a valuable contribution; much of the following chapter attempts to explore more fully how those differences could be brought into classrooms.

However, Lindemann’s rhetoric sometimes seems disingenuous in that she does not make explicit what a careful reading demonstrates: she allies herself with the social view and urges others to do the same even as she denies doing so (However, some theorists, such as Alan France, have called into question whether composition practices privileging academic discourse truly engage a social perspective of writing). Indeed, her claim to an impartial and atheoretical stance, separating “pedagogical arguments from political, historical, and theoretical ones,” is itself politically, historically, and theoretically contingent. It circumscribes writing’s position closer to science than art, a position subordinate to other disciplines, and characterizes composition as a discipline that itself trains students to write in forms that conform to the expectations of authorities, from professors to employers. It should be clear that I do not share her opinion, but that she even acknowledges different views of writing as possible sets her apart from others active in the conversation. She at least suggests that the paradigmatic differences in approaches to writing result in the discontinuities that appear among the five articles in *College English*’s 1995 roundtable.

**Grappling with Discontinuities in the Conversation**

*College English*’s reopening of the conversation in 1995 demonstrated that while the five contributors might claim to discuss the same subject, they were writing from very different positions. Essays by Gamer, Jane Peterson, and Steinberg accompany
Lindemann’s and Tate’s contributions. Like the original point/counterpoint, all first address what role literature might or might not play in first year writing by first invoking the question, what is introductory composition for? In the last of the five contributions, Peterson summarizes the other four in the opening of her own article, prefacing them by acknowledging her “uneasiness” with the conversation they represent.

Defining imaginative literature as poetry, drama, and fiction, Steinberg argues that the issue has been settled and that imaginative literature has no place in freshman composition because it is not even needed to teach style.

Gamer questions some of the assumptions underlying this debate and argues that literature can play an important role in freshman composition because, viewed from a case-study perspective, literary texts are multidisciplinary, embodying “multiple points of view” and enabling students to synthesize what they learn.

Using tagmemics, Lindemann describes what English 101 classrooms are like if the teacher views writing as particle (product), wave (process), or field (system) and then urges us to focus on the goal of freshman composition and identify common ground.

Tate chronicles the death of the discussion twenty years ago with notes from annual CCCC workshops and attributes its demise to two factors: the exaggerated claims made for literature’s role in improving writing and the absence of evidence and new arguments to support using literature.

Peterson’s uneasiness results from her sense that each of these authors adopts views of literature and composition’s goals that do not necessarily fit with her understanding. First, she recognizes that just what “literature” might mean has for the most part been treated unproblematically in the conversation. Lindemann and Steinberg assume the classification “literature” to be self-evident, though Tate does once broaden literature’s “imaginative texts” beyond a very traditional canon to include writing of “students, young children, and amateurs” (“A Place” 319). Gamer further challenges the
“imaginative” categorization of literature, recognizing that even the distinction between “fiction and non-fiction has blurred” (282), in contrast to Steinberg’s unqualified distinction between expository writing and literature (276). Peterson points out that even the canon cannot decide where it is aimed, as typical anthologies might include non-fiction from Maya Angelou, Joan Didion, and Richard Rodriguez with short stories, grouping them all under the common rubric of “literature” (313)—and recall that Warner Taylor’s report on Freshman English made the same point in 1929 (cf. Chapter I).

Peterson primarily locates her uneasiness in the different purposes each of the other contributors to the 1995 roundtable assign to first year writing. The wide gulf between Lindemann’s and Tate’s conceptions of such a course illustrate these different purposes. She feels that a unified telos underwriting composition was determined and validated at the 1987 English Coalition Conference, whose resolution the published report offered as its subtitle: *Democracy through Language*. The “common goal” that emerged from the conference lay in making—according to report editors Richard Lloyd-Jones and Andrea Lunsford—“an indispensable contribution to educating students for participation in democracy” (quoted in Peterson 317). Thus, voices representing all aspects of language arts curriculums, from kindergarten through graduate levels, seemed to speak in unison that the true purpose of writing instruction lay in formulating practices of critical democracy. Furthermore, the report validates “imaginative” writing and reading as part of a variety of ways “to make meaning” student citizens will need, and it even alludes to different models of reading and writing practices in recognizing “multiple ways of reading and writing.” However, the report does not elaborate beyond those vague “multiple ways,” leaving teachers to sort out theoretical differences. Peterson
recognizes that the report received criticism for a seemingly “atheoretical” and expressivist position, but she reads it as instead both informed by and validating critical theory and adopting more of a social perspective of writing and reading (318). However, the report’s own wording sometimes belies Peterson claims. For example, it advocates the use of “current theory” to examine how students and teachers “construct [them]selves as individuals and as members of academic and other communities” (27). Describing students as self-constructing individuals, while a superficially empowering rhetorical move, ignores any constructed identities of those students and has more in common with expressive theory than social-cultural models of writing and reading as described by Faigley and McCormick, respectively.

As Peterson makes clear, one source of her “uneasiness” with the conversation concerning literature in composition in 1995 lies in that it has thus far focused on the question of reading literary texts rather than the contexts in which students should read. She argues that centering on which texts classes engage misses the point of the numerous possible ways of engaging those texts—the misconception that “what students read matters, not how” (313). However, Peterson does not make explicit those multiple ways of reading, suggesting the possibility of various processes without providing a description or an explanation of them, as McCormick does. No one in the conversation mentions The Culture of Reading, and one purpose of this thesis is to adopt McCormick’s theorizing of reading in the discussion of literature in composition. This is a simple move, perhaps, but one that provides one means of organizing a conversation heretofore characterized by confusion over unacknowledged differences in what reading and writing mean to the participants. The more richly theorized conception of reading in McCormick’s tripartite
model contributes to the conversation of reading literature in composition, suggesting that differences among participants might be rooted in insufficiently explored assumptions of whether reading is a cognitive, expressive, or social-cultural act.

Salvatori and Foster—Emphasizing Ways of Reading

The most recent contributions in the conversation concerning literature in composition specifically address theoretical and practical implications of particular strategies of reading and writing, and more explicitly recognize their own perspectives. Taking a close look at how Salvatori and Foster self-consciously negotiate available reading and writing processes reveals some aspects of the complex relationship between the two textual strategies. The two ally themselves with particular modes of reading. Salvatori's conception includes characteristics of both the social and the cognitive, while Foster explicitly advocates expressive reading practices. Their assumptions of students' writing shift to other discourse strategies, suggesting that a particular mode of reading does not necessarily entail a parallel strategy for writing. That is, an expressive reading practice does not necessitate an expressive writing practice, a disjunctures explored more fully in the next chapter. It is worth noting here that the difference suggests differences between reading and writing at odds with some formulations of the two as being the same (see Pearson and Tierney's "Toward a Composing Model of Reading"). Also, the unacknowledged shifts Foster and Salvatori each make among modes of reading and writing appear a testament to the efficacy of a self-conscious adoption of a more richly theorized model of reading and writing, whether literary or otherwise.
In “Conversations with Texts: Reading in the Teaching of Composition,” Salvatori argues for the theoretical interconnectedness of reading and writing, and she shifts the focus from the questions of whether or what to read to how to read. She offers three questions as implicated in the exploration of those multiple ways of reading: (1) Which theories of reading are better suited to teaching reading and writing as interconnected activities? (2) What is the theoretical justification for privileging that interconnectedness? (3) How can one teach that interconnectedness? (443). In the end, she writes “critical self-reflexivity” as the hub of these questions. Theories of reading that make visible their own intentions and understandings are best suited for classrooms engaging writing and writing as interrelated processes, she argues. That interrelatedness should be recognized and privileged because it accounts for how readers make the meaning they read, how they “write” a text as they “read” it. Pedagogical practices approach the dynamic between reading and writing when they invite students to interrogate their own responses during reading, writing as they read, reading their own responses and writing from them as well. In effect, reading and writing are in Salvatori’s view inseparable interpretive acts.

By shifting the focus from what texts students in first year writing read to how those students might approach those texts, Salvatori sidesteps the need to formulate an argument for including or excluding literature. However, the examples of classroom reading she provides are all typically associated with the literary. Lindemann might question whether Salvatori’s description of reading process might function just as well, and more relevantly, with respect to academic discourses. More important, however, is Salvatori’s recognition—one that Lindemann does not make—of both reading and
writing as processes, and her suggestion that there are numerous ways of reading leaves room for the multiple perspectives offered by McCormick. This is an important move because it is the first time the conversation concerning literature in composition as it has developed in *College English* and *CCC* has in any detail acknowledged reading as a process, and the possibility that multiple such processes may be available. Furthermore, when Salvatori describes reading as “an opportunity to investigate knowledge-producing practices” (444), she allies reading with knowledge production rather than “information-processing,” which McCormick views as a cognitive—and reductive—approach (*Culture of Reading* 13). Instead, Salvatori views reading as a dialectic, one in which readers negotiate meaning between themselves and the text in producing meaning.

However, this progressive turn seems in part limited by her description of a “difficulty paper,” in which students identify problems that they may have encountered in reading a particular text. She describes how students’ readings of these responses “almost inevitably” result in the papers identifying the text’s primary argument as the biggest challenge they faced in their reading (448). Salvatori does not explore this further or suggest any ways in which that difficulty is predicated upon possible social or cultural structures relating students and text in particular ways. She opts instead for an assumption of the text as offering a singular and accessible, if challenging, meaning to students writing about it. Indeed, the practice of “critical self-reflexivity” Salvatori describes presumes that the writing students do in response to reading primarily represents their thinking. Most of her argument centers on reading as process and social act, but her description of writing as representing thinking suggests an assumption of writing essentially as a cognitive process. Therefore, as Salvatori’s essay demonstrates,
while tripartite models of both reading and writing use the tags cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural, adopting a particular perspective of reading does not necessarily elicit the mirrored writing practice.

In an article that directly addresses Salvatori’s, David Foster’s “Reading(s) in the Writing Classroom” draws attention to what he views as the “dominant cognitivist approach of the reading-to-write strategies” (518) and juxtaposes their claims with his own expressivist reading/writing practice. The language of some proponents of “reading-to-write” certainly suggest a cognitivist position, as evidenced June Cornell Birnbaum’s assertion that “cognitive capacities of students” progress when they engage both “reading and writing, and view one as a mechanism for developing the other” (emphasis added—quoted in Foster 518). Such a “mechanism” recalls the early cognitivist diagrams describing “the” writing process in terms of computer-like flow charts. Foster recognizes the cognitive as one position, his expressivist pedagogy as another, and he admits that different claims of reading and writing between the perspectives could be in fact due to the different pedagogical environments partially constructed by which view is adopted. That is, almost alone among those participating in the conversation, Foster explicitly recognizes that multiple paradigms underlie the conversation. However, while he recognizes the theoretical differences, he does not further explore them, opting instead to recount his expressivist approach.

Like Salvatori, Foster treats reading as an interactive process. Unlike Salvatori, whose primarily theoretical approach sidesteps what texts might be read, Foster acknowledges the commitment of his course to “personal-writing,” which he distinguishes from courses drawing upon literature. Unfortunately, like many of the
participants in the conversation concerning roles of literature in composition, Foster leaves unsaid just what “literature” might be. His opening list of presumably literary authors includes Annie Dillard, whose writing joins the assigned reading in Foster’s “personal-writing (rather than literature-based) course” (519). Just what literature is remains problematic in the conversation, even in the most recent contributions.

To investigate theories of “reading-to-write,” Foster compares the “output” of cognitivist theories with his own findings from a case study of a reading and writing course, and his results do not entirely match cognitivists’ claims for reading’s influence on writing. While his study supports assertions of students’ interaction with texts as a making of meaning, they rarely then transformed awareness of “textual strategies” into “appropriating these elements for their own writing purposes” (519). He contextualizes such an absence of rhetorical imitation by framing that absence within the pedagogical situation of his own classroom. The expressivist environment he sought to foster, one which focused on students’ own voices, precluded a directed and enforced traditional literary and rhetorical practice of imitation—think of Samuel Johnson’s imitation of Juvenal in “The Vanity of Human Wishes.” Interestingly, Salvatori makes a related claim against the pedagogical practice of using texts as models (442). However, Foster does claim that reading affected the student-writers’ conceptions of themselves “as readers and writers” and suggests that “reading/writing” presents a more accurate, if “less-tightly linked,” model than “reading-to-write” to describe how student writers interact with texts outside of formally structured directed responses (535). Foster’s “reading/writing” suggests that guided reading invites an awareness of students’ own writing very similar to the critical self-reflexivity Salvatori advocates. “Moreover, their
efforts to talk and write intelligibly about their reading experiences helped them explore different strategies by means of which voice and tone are constructed” (537). He leaves unsaid just who might construct “voice and tone,” making ambiguous whether those rhetorical features are determined by expressivism’s “authentic self” or constituted by social-cultural structures. Perhaps his admittedly “expressivist” leanings would suggest the former, though Foster demonstrates both conscious awareness and incorporation of multiple perspectives. He opens his article with a critique of cognitive claims, but recognizes that his critique draws upon findings from his own expressivist pedagogical practices. He finally indicts cognitive views of reading and writing based on what he describes as their essentially “unpredictable” nature, predictable phenomena being a hallmark of any methodology based on processing information. While Foster recognizes that social views inform his own expressivist practice, he remains allied to expressivist methodologies. Still, his willingness to both recognize and move among various writing strategies, and his self-reflexivity in his own teaching, provide some hope that discussions concerning literature in composition may soon use awareness of multiple views of reading and writing to move beyond “conflicting ideals.”

In surveying the articles of the past five years concerning literature in composition courses, I have attempted to make visible the paradigmatic differences among those taking part in the conversation and to demonstrate the embeddedness of various arguments within larger critical frameworks. This transverse perspective accomplishes something the longitudinal, diachronic view of history cannot: it demonstrates the relation of the various strands of the discussion with respect to one another. In doing so, I have attempted to illustrate that the structure of reading and writing as cognitive,
expressive, and social-cultural processes is not an extrinsic methodology but already existing within the conversation, though often unacknowledged. It is just a matter of listening a little more carefully and critically. For example, the tags of McCormick's model of reading are implied in Lindemann's use of the particle, wave, field model of writing process, and Peterson suggests that the conversation should focus on reading process, on how texts are read. This synchronic perspective has attempted to clarify the theoretical, historical, and institutional relationships always already there.

The following chapter takes a closer look at the mirrored models of reading and writing as cognitive, expressive, and social processes and how such a schema influences our understanding of the roles literature might or might not play in first year writing. The primarily historical perspectives of these first two chapters allow for a richer theorizing of reading and writing in composition courses. That is, the intersections of reading and writing models can help construct a compass to better maneuver the territory of first year writing and literature in it. First, however, Chapter III incorporates a more complex understanding of "literature" than has so far been engaged in the discussion of such texts in first year writing.
Chapter III: The Problem of "Literature" and the Uses of Intersecting Models of Reading and Writing

The preceding chapters provide sketches of a narrative and a scene of first year composition's incorporation of literature, a use in contest since it first began in 1874. I have tried to represent those diachronic and synchronic views with the primary intent of more fully historicizing and theorizing the extent to which pedagogical questions of what first year writing students should read have been overdetermined by a combination of institutional and political structures and complex, insufficiently articulated theoretical differences. Chapter II offers a means by which to sort these differences, twin models of reading and writing processes. They are in fact models of models, as cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural modes all offer quite different descriptions of what happens when a bit of writing and reading take place. At one level, I have not attempted to privilege one mode over the others, opting instead to point out that insufficient awareness of the various theoretical biases has kept the discussion one of cross purposes and conflict without progress.

At another level, the previous two chapters foreground social-cultural forces constituting the discussion of literature in composition, and practice is a form of advocacy. It would be disingenuous not to recognize my own commitment to processes of reading and writing that foreground social, cultural, and historical structures. Furthermore, this approach to rhetorical process most completely accounts for the other two. Cognitive strategies addressing meaning fixed in a text and focusing on means of accessing it—means and meaning generally the same among readers—and thus address neither expressivism's emphasis on the authentic individual making meaning or ways in
which rhetorical situations are constituted by their social and cultural environments. Expressivist approaches are similar in that they inadequately critique the competing cognitive model: how, for example, that individual is constituted in history. However, while social-cultural discourse strategies can offer understandings of how "individuality" or patterns of cognition might be socially constructed, such discourse can also sometimes seem excessively critical. Emphasizing social and cultural forces can appear to erase the writer, reader, and text; all of which can sometimes seem beside the point when a student is asked to identify the key aspects of a poem or the steps of mitosis as described in a biology textbook.

I am not suggesting that reading and writing strategies in first year writing (whether such courses feature literature or not) should completely adopt social-cultural approaches at the expense of other modes of reading and writing. Like McCormick, I privilege textual strategies that recognize social and cultural forces but seek to use those strategies to contextualize rather than erase other approaches (McCormick 14, 49). The previous two chapters historicize and theorize unacknowledged assumptions held by those in the conversation, silences that have shaped the way the conversation has been framed. That is, College English's 1993 debate began with what seemed a fairly simple question: should first year writing classes use literature as part of their subject matter? Except the problem was not that simple, and never had been. Mead's 1902 survey of literature's role in composition recognized teachers' "conflicting ideals" concerning such use (323), and a quarter century later composition researcher Warner Taylor admitted that "literature" itself is "an elusive term" (552). The contemporary survey demonstrates that many today still hold "conflicting ideals," and just what literature might be remains up
for grabs, as Gamer's and Peterson's arguments indicate. The conflict of "ideals"
remains unsettled as well. Lindemann suggests that the goal of introductory composition
is training, while Tate sees it as articulating individuality, and Peterson, the pursuit of
democratic education.

The differences in these ideals of the purposes of writing instruction to some extent emerges from conflicting ideas concerning what writing is. In contextualizing recent arguments concerning literature in first year composition within a larger historical and theoretical framework, Chapter II suggests that paradigmatic differences among models of writing underlie the conflicts, and this chapter will more specifically relate those differences to multiple understandings of reading that underscore the debate as well. First, however, a revisit to the question of what "literature" might be informs the discussion in that recognizing literature not as a qualitative feature of a text but as the result of a particular reading practice points the way towards several modes of reading. We can hardly consider the roles literature might or might not play in first year writing without first considering just what literature might be, and that is the purpose of the first section of this chapter. I will draw upon critical theory of the past two decades to argue that readers inscribe "literary-ness" in a text in a deliberate act of reading. Furthermore, reading as a productive act of meaning-making problematizes the understanding of writing as the production and reading as the consumption of texts, as they have typically been aligned. The first section of this chapter, then, explores "literary" reading as a signifying act. The second section of this chapter returns to those ways of reading: the expressive, cognitive, and social-cultural, as McCormick categorizes them, terms previously familiar as processes of writing. The section "Theory in the Classroom"
demonstrates how the destabilization of "literature" as a category invites more complex understandings of reading and its relationship to writing when addressing texts. The chapter closes with a social-cultural reading of the text of one of my own introductory composition classrooms, one in which I self-consciously presented student writing as "literature," eliciting mixed response.

**Literature as Socially Constituted and "Read For"**

Peterson and Gamer both view "literature" as a problematic term (and both generally refer to it in quotes) in their 1995 contributions to *College English*’s roundtable. Eschewing Tate’s sketch of "imaginative literature" as fiction, Gamer points out that "the distinction between fiction and nonfiction has blurred if not altogether disappeared, and we now lump both under the all-inclusive rubric of 'text'" (282). Peterson similarly acknowledges "that genre lines blur" and further recognizes literature’s historically fluid signification (323). Their claims allude to the dismantling of categories such as "literature" in the past decades, a result of critical theory’s skepticism of the intrinsic or transcendental value of texts. Gamer’s and Peterson’s assumptions about literature emerge from the work of theorists such as Terry Eagleton, Stanley Fish, and Robert Scholes, names familiar to both literature and composition—disciplines which James Berlin views as historically sharing a dialectical relationship (*Rhetoric* 1). Conflict between the fields is recognized elsewhere as well, as Tate describes composition’s rejection of literature as a subject matter under the authority of his “Rhetoric Police,” and Berlin and Miller both chronicle the low-high status of writing and reading in English
departments as writing programs developed in the United States, as Chapter I demonstrates.

For departments described as being at such odds, then, theorists appropriated by both perhaps offer the opportunity to move from dialect to dialogue. John Schilb points out in *Between the Lines* the two disciplines' mutual appropriation of Scholes and Eagleton (45, 48), and Lester Faigley and Xin Liu Gale both account for composition's drawing upon Fish's work in literary theory ("Three Theories" 50; *Teachers* 30). Much work has been done to build bridges between the conflict sometimes read into the complex relationship between the disciplines, as demonstrated in the number of texts linking the two: Schilb's *Between the Lines: Relating Composition Theory and Critical Theory*, and the collections *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap*, *Convergences: Transactions in Reading and Writing*, and *Writing Theory and Critical Theory*.

How Eagleton, Fish, and Scholes address reading and writing critically informs the conversation addressing what roles literature might play in first year writing classes, because that discussion necessitates clarification what is meant by the term "literature." While these three by no means represent a homogenous viewpoint, and Fish and Eagleton are at odds with Scholes over reader response theory, all address "literature" as a more problematic category than it has been traditionally addressed in composition. The following account of their destabilization of literature as a category is important to the conversation at hand because their claims undermine "literature" as a foundation to the discussion, as it has been generally treated. An examination of their work explores more deeply what Gamer and Peterson only allude to: the social construction of "literature" as...
a category and practice, a more critical understanding that complicates what has previously been, in composition, a reductive view of “literature.”

Eagleton points out that the body of texts signified by the term “literature” has proven fluid in history in response to changing and conflicting ideologies. Since the Romantic period of the early nineteenth century, “literary” texts have generally been associated with Tate’s “imaginative” works of poetry, fiction, and drama. Considering the Romantic episteme of poetry springing from individual genius, literature might then seem essentially expressive discourse. Eagleton, however, draws upon the work of Raymond Williams and others to argue that such privileging of imagination was an act of resistance against a vigorously classist, near-police state society, one oppressive of “creative values” not profitable to capitalist enterprise (19-20). What is both creative and valued changes according to historical and cultural contingencies. To Eagleton, “The value-judgements by which [literature] is constituted are historically variable” (18), and just as social-cultural forces shape historical narratives, so to are the narratives, the stories, of those societies culturally and historically bound. Failing to recognize the historical situation of the emergence of “Literature” as a category has led to its assumed transcendent status, the prevalent view in the discussion of literature in composition, only challenged and then obliquely by Gamer and Peterson. Eagleton argues that rejecting that transcendence in historicizing “literature” erases it, and his first and last chapters together argue for replacing literary approaches with rhetorical. His argument reverses the low-high hierarchy of composition and literature that has played out in universities in the United States and has in part led to some polemics for composition programs excising literature from their curricula, as described in Tate’s reading of “the Rhetoric Police” in
"A Place" and "Notes." *Literary Theory: An Introduction* invites texts typed as "literary" into composition classrooms because those texts are just as receptive as any to rhetorical approaches, a (re)turn to rhetoric also advocated by Berlin and Miller.\(^8\) Eagleton's reading of what "literature" might be—and what it might be for—foregrounds the social situations of the reading and writing of texts.

Rather than emphasize the historical fluidity of the socially constructed meaning of "literature" as a category, Fish focuses on reading itself as an expressive, signifying process. That is, in an understanding of a reader, writer, and a text all within an environment, where Eagleton focuses primarily on the environment, Fish focuses on the reader. *In Is There a Text in This Class?* Fish views individual readers as made and making, members of "interpretive communities" providing means of interpretation, yet still themselves writing meaning over a text. "Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them" (327). He articulates a position at one end of a spectrum of reading as a meaning-making process, an expressive position in which the reader "writes" the text, makes what it signifies. The other end of such a spectrum would be what McCormick types as a view of reading as a cognitive process, accessing the meaning the text already has, unqualified by a passive, accepting reader. A cognitive approach treats "literary-ness" as an intrinsic feature of a text, while for Fish, "literature" is determined in reading practice. That a text is literary (and another is not) is determined in the act of reading. Jane Tompkins points out that this understanding of reading changes the meaning of literature. "If literature is what happens when we read, its value depends on the value of the reading process," and that reading becomes the narrative of the text: "a sequence of events that unfold within
the reader’s mind” (xvi-xvii). Writing “a reading” becomes a matter of representing what happens within the “reader’s mind,” which places Fish at an interesting juncture in that while his view of reading is expressive, his view of writing is essentially cognitive, merely representing individual mental processes completed in reading. Yet Fish places some constraints on readers’ agency, as they are bound within “interpretive communities” that construct their interpretive practices. The practices and assumptions common to those communities provide the parameters for the meaning readers produce.

How these constituting communities are themselves constituted serves as one of Scholes’ critiques of Fish. Scholes does admit to the interpretive practices involved in reading, but questions the separation of those interpretations into what Fish describes in “Literature in the Reader” as “uniform” responses, a “share[d] system of rules that each of them has somehow internalized” (quoted in Tompkins xvii). Scholes objects to the “somehow,” the process by which readers join (or are conscripted by) groups that shape interpretation even more than “either the text or the reader” (Is There a Text 15). Fish’s own shift partly shapes this objection, as his “Literature in the Reader” foregrounds the reader as “constructing” the text, a reader he slightly backgrounds in favor of that reader’s interpretive community in Is There a Text in This Class? published ten years later.

Countering the expressivist reader-as-writer, Scholes foregrounds the social implications of reading. Instead of “reader-power” he offers Textual Power, situating readers within history and culture, and equipped with “both knowledge and skill” to unravel ambiguities and contradictions present in texts (15-16). Textual Power offers some important insights relevant to the way the conversation concerning literature’s roles
in composition has been framed, and how it needs to be reframed. Scholes, unlike the
Eagleton and Fish, specifically addresses writing classes and their relationship with
literature. Like Berlin and Miller, Scholes acknowledges the low-high hierarchy of
composition and literature within English departments, and like Eagleton, he addresses
the political and ideological forces involved in canonizing “literature” above utilitarian
composition. Literature’s sacramental status barred instruction in its production. Milton
might seek to justify the ways of God to people, but one does not teach the ways of God
so as to have them imitated. Instead, Scholes postulates, universities teach the production
of “pseudo-literature” and “pseudo-non-literature,” the textual practices of “composition”
(6). The distinction proves useful insofar as it addresses the utility of such textual
practices, yielding student writing that “supposedly lacks those secret-hidden-deeper
meanings” of literature. Scholes’ “supposedly” suggests that those pseudo-literary texts
might very well feature—in an alternate reading—the deep structure of “secret-hidden-
deeper meanings” literature encodes, which suggests at least one agreement with Fish’s
emphasis of interpretation as construction. That is, Scholes implicates the presumed
absence of “deeper meanings” in pseudo-literary texts (and even their pseudo-status) in
the reading of them. According to him, teachers and peer reviewers in first year writing
classrooms read for what can be fixed or improved, not for what is meant, what aesthetic
significations might be at play. Certainly this description does not unilaterally describe
composition courses, and writers such as Peter Elbow focus on responses that attempt to
reflect readers’ understandings of what the writer means (strategies described in his
Writing With Power, for example). However, Elbow’s is an expressivist understanding
of discourse, and he does not offer ways of reading student writing in terms of meaning within either cognitive or social-cultural models of discourse.

One important way in which Scholes’ work intersects with the conversation at hand is his differentiation between ways of reading student work and literature. To demonstrate a way in which a pedagogical practice might circumvent the socially constructed distinction, a teacher might anonymously present together an established author’s poem and that of a student, a sort of New Critical exercise in the same vein as that I. A. Richards describes in *Practical Criticism*—that is, unidentified and to be judged on their intrinsic value. I did this in one of my own first year writing classes, offering William Stafford’s “Traveling Through the Dark” and Jill Mooney’s “Woman on the Church Steps,” the latter a work Jill, a former student, had written after reading Stafford’s. Because the present figure of authority—the writing teacher—presented the works as a pair under the auspices of literature, the students read them as such, grappling with their “secret-hidden-deeper meanings.” During the ensuing class discussion, one student, Matthew Balance, was disappointed to hear that the second poem was that of a student; he had wanted to get one of her books from the library. Both poems were presented in an English class, printed together on a handout, authenticated by the instructor. Therefore, because their representation marked them as literary, the students read them as *literature* rather than works of *composition*.

What is the difference? Many in the fields of composition and literature have claimed particular binary oppositions between the disciplines. The following lists describe what is typically associated with each discipline, drawing from Jim Corder’s “Rhetorical Analysis of Writing,” Kathleen McCormick’s *The Culture of Reading and
The Teaching of English, J. Hillis Miller's "Composition and Decomposition: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Writing," Schilb's Between the Lines, and Scholes' Textual Power.

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The differences are critical, and suggest why the use of literature in composition classrooms has proven such a issue of longstanding debate. Lindemann views first year writing "to be for" the university, a service course and essentially utilitarian, teaching students how to write in ways appropriate for their future work and course work. On the other hand, Tate sees introductory composition as a means for students to investigate who they are, reading literature to find out who they are "to be." The difference between "to be for" and "to be" is epistemic, paradigmatic. The other binaries further describe how the issue has proved problematic and also demonstrate how the pair, codified as departments grouped under the rubric "English," have yielded a low-high hierarchy.

Compositions are works in progress that can be improved; literature is done. Literature is an art, and is read for pleasure and edification; compositions, if written by "experts" rather than students, are utilized for research. Works of literature are authenticated, eternal, canonized; compositions are "produced in an appalling volume" according to
Scholes (6), and probably destined to be recycled. They are not real texts, only pseudo-texts. There is a sense in which they might be literature when or if they grow up, just as composition might be a "real," "appreciated" discipline when or if it grows up.

The list of oppositions, perhaps paradoxically, provides one means of reconciliation in the muddle of conflict over literature in first year writing. It becomes more clear that a compositionist might take a stand against literature in writing classrooms in an attempt to sidestep the institutional hierarchy. That is, composition has historically occupied a "low" position to literature's "high" in university English departments. It makes sense that to avoid subordinating one's own practice of composition, some writing teachers might excise literature from their curricula.

Some strands of composition have recently moved towards adopting praxes of cultural studies and critical pedagogies, if Berlin and Michael Vivion's *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom* and McCormick's *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English* are any indication. They demonstrate a commitment to theories of pedagogy and pedagogies of theory in an attempt to transform a dialectic into dialogue, while at the same time taking a more critical look at the consumption and production of texts. While the oppositions between literature and composition remain entrenched, there has been effort to dismantle and reconstruct "The English Apparatus," though it is a slow process. While Eagleton, Fish, and Scholes offered revised understandings of literature and the reading of it in the early eighties, the *College English* debates of a decade later—presumed to be representative of conflicting ideas and ideals nationwide—demonstrate that literature is still generally viewed unproblematically, as a fairly fixed canon. Only Gamer and Peterson really suggest otherwise, and that only very briefly. While Eagleton,
Fish, and Scholes do not agree on exactly where agency in meaning-making resides, whether in historical situations or individual readers, none of the three adopt the cognitive "reading" of "literature" and "literary-ness" as intrinsic value. When viewed in a more critical context, "literature" is not really a category at all, or a body of texts we might or might not want to read in writing classrooms. Instead, "literary-ness" is a quality attributed by a particular reading process. Literary-ness is not there. It is read for, by readers who are themselves embedded within histories and cultures that constitute their reading practices, and in being "read for," "literary-ness" is made.

"Literature" as the result of a particular reading practice rather than an intrinsic value shifts the conversation from what texts are read to how they are read. Peterson makes this claim in "Through the Looking Glass" but does not articulate in detail various means of approaching texts. I have sought to clarify the reasoning behind the shift she advocates and to demonstrate the necessary complexity of the term "literature" and the implications of that complexity in discussing roles of literature in composition. The next section will more closely address how literary reading strategies fit among other available modes, and what significance those various strategies might play in courses that embody the self-reflexivity they ask of students.

Theory in Pedagogy, Pedagogy in Theory

If literary-ness results from reader expectation, from what is "read for" in a particular reading practice, what other reading practices are available? McCormick sees a problem here in the attempt to divorce research in literary theory from generalized reading practices: "The primary danger of treating the literary as a separate kind of
reading is that insights about the way readers construct literary texts will not be seen as potentially relevant to other kinds of texts, and an objectivist model will be maintained” (37). That is, educators need to map on to non-literary textual practices the enlarged understanding of reading developed by literary theorists such as Eagleton, Fish, and Scholes. McCormick’s opposition between constructive literary reading strategies and “objectivist” assumptions reverse the relationship Lindemann describes. For example, in “Three Views,” Lindemann associates reading literature in first year composition with treating writing as “a particle”—the objective, or cognitive view, one which she rejects. McCormick, instead, makes clear that literary texts and readers are both situated in history, and that very understanding precludes objectivity. There are only various subjects variously constituted, as she recognizes at the close of the chapter “Three Models of Reading” when she summarizes its three points: “that readers are inter-discursive subjects, that texts are always ‘in use,’ and that different ways of reading have consequences” (64). One such consequence might be the adoption of self-reflexivity, students acknowledging their own situatedness. In McCormick’s view, readers, like the texts they read, are socially and historically situated, and those readers both act and are acted upon. How those texts are read matters, whether the “texts” are “literary,” or students, classrooms, institutions, or reading practices.

Structuring those reading practices is a primary intent of The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English. Formulating such a structure is integral to her intention of “developing dialogues among reading theorists and teachers,” the title of her introduction and the acknowledged purpose of the book (8). While McCormick’s explicit intention is to address reading theory and practice in “literary and cultural studies,” her claims
critically inform discussion of the roles literature might or might not play in composition. As my first chapter shows, first year writing has throughout its history included reading in general and literary texts in particular, and McCormick’s model of reading processes offers a structure by which we may more effectively address questions of that use.

For example, Lindemann’s critique of introductory composition’s use of literature assumes such reading to be cognitive, addressing the text as possessing a fixed meaning. McCormick’s more richly theorized model offers new ways to “read” such critiques of literature in first year writing. The following pages addresses how multiple modes of reading complicate claims made by Lindemann and others against the use of literature, arguments such as: its pedagogy often marginalizes the student by privileging the text; literary criticism’s methodology differs from those of other disciplines; and students do not write literature, so they should not read it in composition classes.

First, Lindemann claims that “many literature courses are not humanistic. They present the teacher’s or the critic’s truths about the poetry, fiction, and drama being studied. They rarely connect literature with life” (313-14). She is absolutely right for literature courses which address reading as a cognitive process, treated meaning as embedded in the text, to be extracted through careful reading, a sort of textual tomb raiding. Expressive reading would transfer the meaning-making to the student, but as Catherine Belsey points out in her critique of expressive realism and “reader-power,” this shift merely relocates an inauthentic autonomy, shifting authority from text to reader (34). However, courses addressing reading as a social-cultural process connect reading “with life” by addressing social and cultural concerns of race, class, and gender, whether those concerns emerge from reading a Jamaica Kincaid short story or a newspaper
feature. Belsey’s argument resembles Miller’s arguments that daily themes trivialize and privatize discourse, and both make problematic the possibility for expressivist methodologies to accomplish their aims. That is, the expressivist commitment to authentic individuality, Tate’s assumption in “A Place,” may not allow for addressing students’ “private and public lives.” However, not all writing in first year writing necessarily emerges from social critique—though an underlying assumption of this thesis is that such critique is an essential part of self-reflexivity, of being aware of one’s situation within various institutional and political structures.

Second, critical theory’s emphasis on interpretation and historicizing irrespective of discipline suggests a wider forum than the “personal interpretations” (the hallmark of expressivism) Lindemann decries in literary criticism. A three-part model of reading allows for responses other than the expressive. Recognizing and at times choosing among multiple processes of reading and writing offers an opportunity for introductory composition courses to encounter texts in various ways. Finally, the very existence of “literature” as a corpus and a discipline has been challenged, most notably by Eagleton and Scholes. Were cultural and rhetorical studies to replace literary studies, as Eagleton and Berlin suggest should happen, there would be no limit—and should be none—on what sort of texts introductory composition could address.

Third, treating literary-ness not as a qualitative feature of a text but as something “read for” can be appropriated to a classroom in which the reading and writing consists entirely of students’ own work, which Lindemann sees as introductory composition’s rightful subject matter. That is, classrooms might attempt to have students read their own work in terms of what it means, how its signs can be interpreted—hallmarks of literary
practices. If "literature" is a socially constructed category, then the society of the classroom can attempt to reconstruct the distinctions between literary texts and their own.

Not without significant challenges, of course. In the first section of this chapter, I recount an episode in which I gave my introductory composition students two unidentified poems, one by published poet William Stafford, the other by Jill Mooney, a student from the previous year. The students addressed both as literature. My own allegiances to social-cultural reading strategies reduce my interest in such New Critical exercises as they divorce texts from the contexts of their production. What follows is my own "reading" (in a social-cultural mode) of the efforts of students invited to engage literary reading strategies with student writing. I developed a collection of essays for use in Writing 121, an anthology that recognized the situation of the (student) authors. However, I presented their work as literary writing in the book titled *Burnt Offerings, a Collection of Literature*: bound, purchased at the campus bookstore, essays not to be revised but read, interpreted, enjoyed. Numerous course reading and writing assignments that quarter drew upon the anthology, papers of summary and analysis, much as the students will be asked to do in papers throughout college. Several class discussions focused on essays in *Burnt Offerings*, their language and structure, what assumptions seemed implicit in the writing, how the authors negotiated the territory of the essay, how its conventions constrained them, and how meaning was made.

At the end of the quarter, I asked the students to write an argument for or against the use of *Burnt Offerings*, or a new edition that would include some of their own writing, for future readers. The students' rhetorical situation was not hypothetical; I served as a real audience, susceptible to the very persuasions I evaluated. I found their responses
both insightful and a little deflating, as many of those both for and against future use of
the text offered the same argument—student writing differed from that of “real” authors.
Jen Nye puts it bluntly: “The pieces in Burnt Offerings are tools, not accredited
masterpieces.” As “tools,” they are not literature, which simply is; they are
compositions, and their utility erases their aesthetic value, echoing both Oscar Wilde’s
“All art is completely useless” and Taylor’s survey of first year programs in 1928: “[If
‘literary’ works are] employed as models and stimuli for themes, they become a means to
an end and lose their significance as pure literature” (552). Furthermore, Nye associates
that absence of literary value with a lack of accreditation, a lack of authenticity inherent
in student work. As her fellow student Casey Monroe sees it, “Student writing has too
many flaws.” Burnt Offerings is student writing, therefore it is flawed, therefore it is not
perfect, therefore it is not literature.

Paradoxically, the very “flawed” nature of the essays made them objects of
identification for these students, whether for better or for worse. That identification
includes both the reader and writer as occupying similar historical spaces—students at
Oregon State University, in my first year writing class—and writing in response to
assignments. Because of this, as student Andrew Jackson remarks, “it was easy to relate
to the writers and understand what they were writing about. Other times it was
frustrating. Since the authors . . . wrote under the same premise [an assignment], their
work became predictable and tedious.” Apparently, for Jackson, the similar rhetorical
situations of many of the student authors, the nearly identical audiences, exigences, and
constraints, all resulted in the development of a genre: the Burnt Offerings essay. In
their view, student writing was not literature precisely because it was student writing, and
thus in the estimation of those who were themselves first year students, "flawed," "predictable," and "not accredited masterpieces." In effect, the effort to dissolve the distinction between student writing and literature reinforced that very distinction.

*Burnt Offerings* did win some converts. Jill Maynard writes, "The text for Writing 121 provides literature that is no different than that of authors published in other textbooks... the quality of their writing is just as great... as other published authors, [and] *Burnt Offerings* is discussed in the same style." However, Maynard’s response cannot be divorced from its context, an argument written in support of the use of the reader, an argument she knew I would evaluate—and I had created and employed the text, hardly making me a disinterested audience. The context of the classroom constrains the writing that takes place within it, and in his argument, Jackson alludes to the complex power structure pervading the classroom. "As students, we were required to read, analyze, discuss, and write about many of the pieces in *Burnt Offerings.*" "As students, we were *required* to read... and write." As students, the authors of the selections in the anthology were similarly *required* to read and write, and Jackson suggests that such a context precludes literary status.

My effort failed to expose to the students ways in which the category of "literature" is culturally constituted, yet their responses demonstrate the efficacy of that argument. If those first year students determined the writing in *Burnt Offerings* was not "literature" because it was student writing, because it was assigned, then that itself suggests how "literature" is constructed as a category: its authors cannot be students, and literary writing must emerge from intrinsic motivation to possess intrinsic value. That understanding of literature itself seems constituted both by Romantic understandings of
literature emerging from individual genius and a sort of Puritan work ethic linking excellence to hard work. In their estimation, student “genius” was too rare and too “fleeting” to yield real literature.

Engaging student writing as literature in first year writing classrooms faces incredible challenges in that the invitation for students to oppose socially constituted conventions occurs within a classroom itself socially constituted, with its own conventions. Those conventions include the subordination of student subjects, a subordination that makes problematic identifying their work as literary. While treating student writing as literature is not the way to invite students to become more aware of multiple writing processes, my efforts illustrate an important factor in such attempts. Addressing student writing as an object of discourse in ways that might prove socially progressive necessitates addressing the complexities of students as (subordinate) subjects in discourse, a claim that itself represents a social-cultural reading strategy of the “text” of an introductory composition classroom.

Conclusion

The “conflicting ideals” Mead identified in 1903 concerning teachers’ views of literature in first year writing remains an apt description of our contemporary situation. That conflict has as much to do with how reading and writing are addressed as it does with the various objectives offered for the course. That is, Lindemann identifies cognitive reading as a practice common to literature departments, one she does not want to see employed in writing classrooms, so she eschews the texts of that discipline. However, a cognitive reading process could just as easily be engaged with any text, be it
business writing or Beowulf. Foster's class employs both cognitive and expressive strategies, reading and writing practices differing from the social-cultural practice espoused by Berlin, McCormick, and Susan Miller (cf. Rescuing the Subject).

Peterson proclaims that "we need to agree on the purpose of Freshman English, as Lindemann suggests, if we are ever to agree on what occurs within it" (318). Hers is a very large "if," particularly as she makes it contingent upon reaching "consensus about the goal of English studies." Peterson argues that such consensus was established at the 1987 English Coalition Conference and points toward its official report identifying "participation in democracy" as such a goal (Lloyd-Jones and Lunsford 85). However, Peterson's reading of a totalized meaning from the text of the conference is not a unanimous one. In his "reading" of the conference's narrative in What is English? Peter Elbow views the adoption of the official title of the Coalition Report, Democracy Through Language, in very different terms than Peterson. He writes, "the phrase is hopelessly general and has a patriotic if not sloganeering ring to it" (31), a description quite different from Peterson's positivistic reading of both conference and report. Furthermore, Elbow locates the conference's "consensus" in "making meaning" (82). He describes what he sensed as an underlying expressivism at the conference. "I think I heard a bit more emphasis at the conference on agency and making meaning. In reading as in writing, I heard more stress on the idea that it is your choice" (84). Of course, Elbow's commitment to expressivist reading and writing allows for an explanation of his reading the text of the conference, its 21 day narrative, as reflecting his own theoretical bias. Still, considering that Elbow's book is not a marginalized reading, but rather jointly
published by the Modern Language Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, the only real consensus seems to be conflict.

The purpose of this thesis has been to mitigate such conflict in two ways. First, chapters I and II demonstrate the extent to which questions concerning literature in first year writing are constituted in theory and history, in the political and social. I call attention to efforts to "read" introductory composition outside of its complex historical situation and how those efforts have proven obfuscatory. Second, this thesis suggests ways in which the cross-purposes of various proponents and opponents of literature in introductory composition in large part emerge from the failure to sufficiently examine the assumptions concerning the basic terms of the debate: "literature," "reading," and "writing." I have sought to articulate the existing complexity of the situation and apply a theoretical framework with which to better describe it. Shifting focus from what to read and write to how to read and write involves foregrounding multiple processes of reading and writing. Differences over whether or not particular texts are of use in writing classrooms might be better understood as differences over how to approach and write about any text, literary or otherwise. Bringing more richly theorized conceptions of reading to the discussion of literature in composition offers the opportunity for a common-place among those of different views. Agreeing upon the terms of the discussion—reading and writing as processes best identified as cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural—allows for shared terminology to serve as a means of productive discussion.

Such a terministic screen is not itself a unifying theory for composition pedagogy, bringing together all of the diverse approaches to teaching reading and writing. For
example, a writing teacher engages an expressivist approach when she invites students to understand a text through their responses to it when those responses are presumed to emerge from an authentic and unconstructed self. This teacher may find herself at odds with another who instructs students to treat texts as containers of fixed meaning, or another who invites students to focus on the relationship of text and reader within a larger context of culture and history. These different theoretical allegiances will be complicated by the assumptions made about the writing that presumably represents these “readings.” Each of these teachers may be able to identify their own preferences—and those of others—as representative of an expressive, cognitive, or social-cultural position. That identification will not necessarily alleviate any of their differences. In a sense, a shared terminology merely allows various proponents to agree on the terms of their disagreement. However, if introductory composition is to truly serve student writers, it might best do so by inviting them to identify what particular reading and writing strategies might be most appropriate for particular rhetorical situations. Furthermore, agreeing upon the terms of how to best describe ways of reading and writing and being more self-reflexive concerning the application of those strategies might move the discussion of literature in first year composition beyond its present stasis.

The conversation concerning literature in first year writing needs a more richly theorized and historicized framework that acknowledges multiple perspectives involved if it is to move beyond the irresolvable vagueness of “conflicting ideals.” Adopting a more critical understanding of “literature” transforms the discussion from the question of what to read to that of how. McCormick offers one model of that “how” in her description of three processes of reading, the cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural
approaches. She claims that various understandings of reading can be usefully organized in more complex ways than has been engaged thus far, and her own textbook *Reading Texts: Reading, Responding, Writing*, co-authored with Linda Flower and Gary Waller, addresses multiple reading and writing strategies available for students. For the most part, such formulations have been insufficiently foregrounded in the discussion of literature in first year writing classrooms as it has appeared in *College English* and *CCC*. I apply McCormick's model of reading to the discussion of literature in composition in that differing opinions of reading literature may be better described as differing opinions of reading, whether the texts in question have been described as "literary" or not. Enriching the use of McCormick's model of reading is the prevalence of three perspectives of writing process that share the same terms as the reading model: again, the tags of cognitive, expressive and social-cultural. A discussion of reading literature thus shifts to a discussion of processes of reading, which brings with it processes of writing and the relationship between the two. A particular reading strategy does not necessitate the mirroring writing strategy, as exemplified in Fish's and Foster's written responses representing expressive reading followed by an assumed cognitive writing process. The mirroring of terms and accompanying disjunctures between models of reading and writing coupled with their suggests that the complex relationship between the textual practices deserves more exploration.

Again, of the three modes of discourse, the social-cultural approach seems particularly comprehensive as it best accommodates the other two. However, its tradition of critique and its emphasis on the context of reading and writing differ from the approaches of those who would instead foreground the role of the student as reader or
writer—an expressivist position—or the text—a cognitivist approach. The expressivist and cognitivist tropes may prove more valuable if they engage the reflexivity a social-cultural approach typically engenders. Conversely, engaging a social-cultural approach in reading and writing in introductory composition could sometimes benefit from cognitivist and expressivist privileging the text itself and a reader or writer making meaning, respectively. Perhaps McCormick’s description best engages the models of both reading and writing process, describing them as acts “balanced between autonomy and determination as an author both consciously and unconsciously appropriates aspects of the general and literary ideology of his or her particular social formation” (70).

Probably the best pedagogical application of the theoretical exploration of this thesis would be a first year writing classroom that acknowledged the twin models of reading and writing process and invited students to read and write in various ways, reading and writing texts both “literary” and otherwise. Even with the sometimes blurred boundaries among cognitive, expressive, and social-cultural strategies, a three-part model of reading and writing articulates the previous theoretical silences in discussions of texts for use in composition classrooms, whether what is read is addressed as “literature” or not.
These two practices continue today in that they resemble academic discourse and expressive writing. That is, responding to authorized, canonical works in accepted, “intelligent” ways involves consuming texts, adopting a particular academic discourse that a reader will recognize as appropriate, “intelligent.” The daily themes, writing the local perceptions of an authorial self, sounds like expressive discourse, producing texts. The either/or for Hill in 1878 remains a place of contest today, if the recent exchanges of academic versus expressive discourse in the 1997 volume of the CCC are any indication.

While Lindemann directs first year writing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, her claim of what “Freshman English offers” cannot necessarily be read as what the courses she designs offer. As Edward Corbett points out, even graduate teaching assistants instructed to employ other pedagogical practices sometimes “cannot resist the siren song of literature” (quoted in Bishop 435).

Alan France’s “Assigning Places: The Function of Introductory Composition as a Cultural Discourse” collapses the academic discourse versus expressive dialectic, as perhaps best exemplified in David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow’s well-known debates, into a single camp. He claims that they are really two sides of the same coin, treating texts within a model of the capitalist practices of consumption and production. Instead, France argues, first year composition should address the distribution of power these models of writing perpetuate “in order to clear the ground for a third rhetorical position from which writing might become an active means to transform the existing social inequities of commodity capitalism” (593).

Not all participants viewed the conference in the same manner as Peterson. Peter Elbow describes it quite differently in What is English?, his record of the English Coalition (see Chapter III).

In part, this tradition of critique (frequently in the negative sense of the term) may emerge from its association with the ideological Left. That is, the various strands of the contemporary Left, from neo-Marxism to feminist cultural materialism to deconstruction, share a common history of exposing the “not-okay” often occluded by the “okay.” Alan France’s work provides a good example of how such critique plays out in current composition theory.

See the 1997 point/counterpoint of David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow in CCC, or Alan France’s “Assigning Places: The Function of Introductory Composition as a Cultural Discourse.”

Eagleton argues that reader response does not contextualize those responses “with the kinds of social and historical individuals we are” (89), and the final two chapters of Textual Power explicitly oppose Fish’s position.

Berlin argues for this rhetorical (re)turn in Rhetoric and Reality, “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class”, and Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures. Miller’s relation of composition to rhetoric is more complex, particularly in that she argues against the continuity that Berlin inscribes between them (Textual Carnivals 80). Still, however complex that relationship, Miller claims that it must be recognized and clarified for “composition studies to take a clearer intellectual place among analogous contemporary fields” (Rescuing the Subject 8).

McCormick explicitly links “literary and cultural studies” in the introduction to The Culture of Reading (8).
Bibliography


Miller, J. Hillis. “Composition and Decomposition: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Writing.” Horner 38-56.


