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## KEEPING (IN) OUR PLACES, KEEPING OUR TWO FACES

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Reading through the chapters in this collection, I keep thinking how far we've come and how much we've stayed in place since we professed that we do indeed have a discipline, whether we call it rhetoric and composition, composition and rhetoric, rhetoric and writing, or whatever. But in our various namings, I think we have been careful to capture by these yokings our Janus-faced nature.

In a study I did some ten years ago of those who "live" rhetoric and composition, I reported that about twenty percent of the faculty I surveyed made a distinction between *rhetoric* and *composition*, *rhetoric* being associated with theory and history, with "rigorous scholarship," with graduate programs and courses; *composition*, with "service" courses and the undergraduate curriculum (78). For those who see a distinction between the two terms, rhetoric is the theory that drives practice, more of an intellectual distinction than a programmatic one. Rhetoric draws us into the theoretical and historical study of texts while composition draws us into the theory and practice of the writing process. A number of respondents distinguished the two terms along the lines of intellectual versus personal/administrative work: rhetoric is theory-driven, and composition is service-oriented. Indeed, the responses mirror the long history of rhetoric with two joined-yet-separate faces: subject and method.

Since the 1960s, we've tried to preserve the conjunction between the two words in light of the ever increasing tendency to surrender to the disjunctive *or*. Because I may be the Romantic Idealist that some have tagged me, I strain always to preserve the linkage of rhetoric and composition because it captures what for 2,500 years rhetoric has been—the oldest of the humanities, a true metadiscipline with both a body of knowledge and a methodology.

Indeed, I recognize my preservationist tendencies here, the tendencies that make me uneasy about separating ourselves from our traditional English department home, however dysfunctional this familiar

home may be. We don't need to be told again those old horror stories of both gender and disciplinary bias, of the tenure famine of the 1970s and early 1980s, of the dawning realization that yes, our field is a "feminized" one in terms of salary equity and real power. One needs only to look at the surveys of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition studies from 1985 to 2000 and the Modern Language Association's *Job Information List* since 1993 to see the growing strength and recognition of rhetoric and composition studies.

And we have made significant progress: in the 1980s doctoral studies in rhetoric/composition grew rapidly; by 2000 such programs are defined by their consolidation, diversification, and maturation. The biggest change in graduate studies has been the interdisciplinary breadth of course work and dissertation areas, leading to a new kind of generalist rather than the specialist that helped define us in the 1990s. The majority of doctoral students in rhetoric/composition are female (70 percent), and this majority will be reflected in faculty positions in the near future. Study and analysis of all these changes can help us write, or rewrite, the future direction of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition studies. The chapters in this volume will help us all think about future directions, whether it will be more writing programs separating themselves from the traditional home in English studies or whether it will be the majority of us keeping our places—even if it means "keeping in our places."

Because I have no direct experience with independent writing departments, I can respond to this collection only within the framework of the above paragraphs. What the various chapters do make clear to me is that no definitive guidelines exist for creating independent departments of writing. Each independent department or academic unit evolved from particular circumstances such as local politics, funding fights, the ubiquitous gap between literature and composition, part-time labor issues. How an independent writing department is defined differs from institution to institution, each unit being adapted to its particular institution.

What is less clear to me, and more troublesome, is how or if independence would strengthen or weaken the gains we've made in redefining our intellectual work, the kind of scholarship of integration that Ernest Boyer has argued for, which makes connections across the discipline and which places work and knowledge in a larger context of knowledge making. Our discipline has modeled this reconsideration of scholarship, so I am troubled by what I see as the almost total exclusion of

rhetoric in independent departments of writing, troubled by what I fear is a regression in the gains we've made in getting tenured, troubled by what might be even more marginalization of the field by even more intense disciplinary and gender bias, troubled by the thought of erosion of our newly achieved solid base of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, troubled by a wider gap—real or perceived—between public-supported universities that have large, structured programs of writing remaining in their disciplinary home and independent units with perhaps less political exchange value in the institution at large.

I have no ready answers; I do find myself asking lots of questions in response to my reading of *Field of Dreams*. My questions, reflections, and responses that follow seem all tangled up, connected by major issues about which we've been conversing for years. So the issues themselves are not new, but we may lose precious ground we've managed to gain over the last ten to fifteen years. (When I say that the issues themselves are not new, I recognize that with only a few changes here and there, my comments could be about rhetoric and composition studies housed in English departments, not separate departments of writing.)

Would continued formation of independent departments of writing create yet another binary analogous to the ever spreading binary between the civic and knowledge-making characteristics of rhetoric and the career-oriented, service-providing characteristics of a narrowly conceived perception of "composition"?

How is "rhetoric *and* composition studies" being defined through and by the formation of independent departments? Although there is some mention of trying to keep the conjunction *and*, most identify themselves, and the departments, as being defined by composition, not rhetoric. (Some independent departments of *rhetoric*, however, are mentioned, but these references are tangential to the volume as a whole.) With few exceptions, the independent departments offer no "rhetoric" history, theory, praxis, even though they might include "rhetoric" as part of the department name. One unit that is named the "Rhetoric Program" has as its published outcomes/goals "the ability to write and speak clearly, cogently, and grammatically" and its principal elements "a required course sequence," "a program of testing," "a writing center for tutorial support," and "cross-curricular faculty participation." The program is primarily motivated by the "growing national attention to writing and writing pedagogy" (see Deis, Frye, and Weese, this volume). "Composition Studies" is part of this volume's subtitle, and I would

argue that in this term, which many of us have adopted as naming our discipline, reside the theory and history of rhetoric; that is, the term *composition studies* evokes praxis in its fullest sense. Most of the independent departments described herein, it seems to me, do not embrace the more inclusive meaning of “rhetoric,” but rather “composition” in its narrowest sense of “service”; what is lost is the concept of rhetoric and composition as knowledge making and conscious civic participation.

Will the too narrow focus that most of the independent units describe lead to even more marginalization than we now experience for writing programs housed in traditional English departments? Almost without exception the independent departments are career oriented, offering a curriculum in “academic” writing, business writing, technical writing, scientific writing, expository writing, perhaps journalism, along with the traditional first-year composition curriculum—and possibly creative writing. Most of the independent departments exist without a major (some do have tracks or majors in technical or professional writing); there are no curricula or tracks whereby undergraduates in rhetoric and composition could feed into either M.A. or Ph.D. graduate programs in rhetoric and composition. Thus, too often the writing instructors are seen as “discourse technicians” or “tenured remediators” (see Turner and Kearns, this volume). Such a curriculum seems at odds with what many rhetoric and composition programs are working to put in place: undergraduate tracks in rhetoric and composition that include history, theory, research, and pedagogy—not just text production. I don’t think there is another discipline where students can enter its graduate level with no course work in the discipline itself. Yet this is mostly true of rhetoric/composition. Imagine entering graduate studies in literature with not one undergraduate course in literature.

Will independent status exacerbate familiar problems we all face: underfunding (in large part more work being done by fewer faculty under heavy workload/light power conditions, low status, salaries not commensurate with other faculty); our image as mere “service providers”; problems with promotion and tenure (especially over definitions of intellectual work, how administration “counts,” and insistence on “traditional” kinds of scholarship); overdependence on adjunct and part-time labor, even though several of the independents draw mostly on a faculty that is permanent non-tenure-track? Maybe working conditions would change over time for faculty in independent departments; it seems to me, however, that the onerous burden of administrative work

we all carry seems even heavier for the few ranked faculty in independent units, mostly staffed by adjuncts, teaching assistants (TAs), and/or permanent non-tenure-track faculty.

Will the dependence on permanent non-tenure-track and part-time faculty mean even fewer senior faculty, which would likely lead to further problems in the few tenure-track junior faculty getting tenure, as only, usually, full professors serve as voting members of promotion and tenure committees? In addition, the lack of senior faculty means not only a heavier burden of committee work for junior faculty—both non-tenure- and tenure-track—but also perhaps expanded time lines and constricted progress with committee work.

How might the tenure process be further complicated by a faculty member's unique status in being part of an independent unit housed outside the English department? Some if not most of the independent programs seem outside the institution's promotion and tenure system in that they are outside an established and accepted disciplinary tradition, making the new academic unit and its faculty vulnerable to problems with getting tenure. Of course, there would be the usual problems, such as how to recognize and value much of writing program administration as discipline-based intellectual work, but outside the hard-fought discipline base we now have, the problems most likely would be exacerbated. Many if not most of the essays mention problems with getting tenure—those familiar problems for us old-timers in rhetoric/composition. There's a sense of *déjà vu* in that some of the hard-fought-for understanding of who we are and what it is we do seem to be the same old fights—but on a new field.

What are the implications of independent programs or departments primarily being housed in small liberal arts colleges and in some four-year universities? With few exceptions, such independent departments are not housed in comprehensive or research universities (see the description of Syracuse's independent department, this volume chapter eleven, for the most cogent exception). This question, of course, is a big one; subsumed in it are many of the other questions I muse over in my response to the fields of dreams, some already built.

How will independent writing programs affect graduate studies in rhetoric and composition? As far as I can tell, only three of the separate departments described in this volume have a graduate program in rhetoric or rhetoric/composition, and, of those three, only one has a doctoral-level program: Syracuse University. Will there be no course work in

history and theory of rhetoric (already there is no place or space to present research and scholarship in these areas, it seems, at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication)? Will Ph.D.'s in rhetoric/composition—or “composition specialists” as they'll no doubt be named—be turned out only to become permanent non-tenure-track instructors? At my own university, the rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English graduate faculty are committed to the stewardship of the composition program. If rhetoric is shorn from composition (some say it's already been shorn), will we be posturing either as those who place themselves within one of the traditions of rhetoric or as those who face themselves toward composition?

A final assertion and another question: We can ask these same questions about writing programs staying *within* English departments. With such an apparent, and final, split between “rhetoric” and “composition” in the way separate departments of writing are formed and in the majority's career-oriented mission, what will be our future place, and face? We can build our fields of dreams, far away from the playing field we've tried so hard to level—and with considerable success—and players will come. But who will lose—or win—the most?