CULTURAL RHETORICS: WRITING AND DISCIPLINARITY AT THE INTERSECTION OF BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES AND RHETORIC

by

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ABSTRACT

CULTURAL RHETORICS:
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This project reads scholarship on the intersections of cultural studies and composition to argue that the counterdisciplinary emphasis of British cultural studies has been eliminated in U. S. composition and rhetoric studies. In response to the de-politicization of cultural studies that results from the elimination of concerns over disciplinarity, this project advocates a strategic recovery of British cultural studies and demonstrates how the counterdisciplinary focus of cultural studies helps intervene in contemporary scholarship in composition and rhetoric. This project then demonstrates the uses of cultural rhetorics, for composition scholarship and pedagogy, through critical readings of Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* and Julie Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust.*

To Amy and Leo

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Introduction

> Whether writing is seen as the instance of the law, the loss of immediacy, or the subversion of the master, whether it opens up a stance of domination, a space of exile, or the pathway to freedom, one thing, at least, is clear: the story of the role and nature of writing in Western culture is still in the process of being written. And the future of that story may be quite unforseeable, as we pass from the age of the book to the age of the byte.
>
> Barbara Johnson, p. 48-49

> This political dimension is one legitimate reason there is concern about the establishment of a cultural studies orthodoxy, about cultural studies' inclusion within the tradition academy, or about the incorporation of its work and its challenges within more conventional academic discourses.
>
> Graeme Turner, p.6

This project grows out of three different experiences: work in a professional business setting, academic research in the fields of composition and rhetoric and cultural studies, and the teaching of writing. In fact, the focus of this dissertation on teaching practices that encourage students to analyze the often invisible ways that knowledge is produced and organized, first came to mind in my work outside the academy.

Prior to entering graduate school, I spent a number of years working as a litigation support representative (a euphemism for sales person) for a company that helped attorneys in the various phases of trial preparation. The company, located in downtown Kansas City, was divided into two floors that illustrated a split between those whose ideas mattered and those who were not paid to think. The sixth floor, where management, sales and administrators had their individualized offices, served as the

company's seat of power--as the seat of power where one might imagine that important decision behind closed doors. On the seventh floor, production did its work in a labyrinth of photocopy machines, computers and office supplies, organized around work stations in an open space that that facilitated surveillance.

What became even more evident as I worked for the company longer was that all manner of company business--from who answered the phone calls to how proposals were written--were determined by the assumptions about knowledge of those who were at the top of the company. When, for example, an African American male was denied a promotion to in-house sales representative, it was widely speculated that management had concerns about how clients would perceive his "dialect." And when I wrote proposals for clients, they were often rewritten by my manager who wanted to include several pages of biographical information about the company. What became apparent, then, was that despite notions about what counts as good writing or speaking--ideas I learned in college--what counted as privileged knowledge in the company was what management decided.

My experiences at this company invited comparisons between the business world and academia that bear strongly on this argument for a pedagogical approach that focuses attention on the production of knowledge and the possibilities of resistance from within such institutions. Questions about the way power functioned in concert with the production of knowledge which arose at the litigation support company, encouraged me to enroll in a graduate program in composition and rhetoric and cultural studies--two areas that offered models of institutional power.

As an account representative I traveled between these two floors, bringing orders to the production people on the seventh floor and working with the "suits" (of which I was one) on the sixth floor. Over drinks at the corner bar, production workers treated me with an odd mixture of resentment and reverence. They checked what they said in front of me for fear that I might "narc" on them for their disparaging comments about management. At the same time, they referred to me (and other members of the sixth floor) as "educated," "sophisticated" and even "cultured." Conversely, members of the sixth floor embraced me as one of them and included me in their often-disparaging conversations about production workers' lack of intelligence and sophistication.

What struck me as I worked for this company was that the stark division between the sixth and seventh floor employees was reinforced by many subtle assumptions about where privileged knowledge comes from. For example, upon entering the sixth floor, one would encounter the trappings of high culture, including a series of paintings that adorned the hallway, ornate woodwork, and a reception area surrounded by well-manicured plants. To emphasize the individuality of management, each office had its own aesthetic. While the Vice President's office featured a bookshelf filled with canonical texts, the President's office was filled with delicate model ships.

These fine touches were contrasted with the drab uniformity of the seventh floor where individual workstations were identical to one another. In contrast to the furnishings and artwork that one encountered on the sixth floor, upon entering the sixth floor you would see a clock with time cards. Above the clock was a directive that stated "All employees MUST have their time cards signed by a supervisor. You WILL NOT BE PAID if your time card has not been signed." In essence the sixth floor had an air of a

place where people were busy making important decisions; it was the place where the thinking and writing was done. The seventh floor was the place where one was written to and about.

I have since come to view that these subtle expressions of individuality, thought and language were much more important in shaping the employees' perceptions, than the official documents that might contradict them. Despite the company's official statements about "taking care of our own" and being an "equal opportunity employer," for instance, I never saw anyone from the seventh floor move "up" the company ladder when positions were advertised in house. In some cases this was because seventh floor employees were not interested in the type of work that was done on the sixth floor. In other cases, seventh floor employees simply did not apply for the jobs because they felt that they lacked the polish required to fit in with the suits. And in the many cases where seventh floor employees did apply for positions in management or administration, they were overlooked.

Over time seventh floor employees found ways to resist what they saw as discriminatory hiring practices. In response, for example, one or more employees would leave copies of articles on corporate racism in the seventh floor break room. Other employees stole equipment or supplies that they reasoned were owed to them in lieu of promotions. These acts of resistance to discriminatory hiring practices arose because some of the employees accurately "read" the invisible barriers to their own advancement and acted accordingly. However, these acts of resistance were rare and had little impact on business as usual, in part because many of the employees like me failed to see and

contest the more subtle ways that power circulated through the organization of privileged forms of knowledge in the company.

As I continued to work in business, moreover, a dialectical relationship developed between my graduate work (and teaching) and my work at the litigation support company. Ultimately my "study" of the business, the texts I was reading and the classes I was teaching, led me to the conclusion that serves as the impetus for this project: more scholarly work needs to be done that focuses on how to prepare students to negotiate the various forms of knowledge production they encounter in both academic and non-academic institutions. What is the relationship between the organization of knowledge in a specific institution and the cultural politics? What approaches to the teaching of writing might encourages students to "read" and negotiate a given company? Industry?

Just as I was interested in the racial and gendered implications of who produced official knowledge in the litigation support company, I was drawn to scholarship in both cultural studies and social epistemic rhetorics that focused on the problems associated with the way academic institutions have historically organized knowledge around disciplines. As a result, this dissertation argues for a pedagogy located at the intersections of cultural studies and rhetoric that encourages students to "read" the ways that institutions produce knowleges which privilege some people and exclude others. Moreover, this study assumes that developing abilities to read the production of knowleges will enable means of resisting such practices.

The specific questions that this dissertation seeks to address are: are resistant approaches to writing instruction based on cultural studies theories possible from within the "hegemonic" academy? Are they desirable? What would such pedagogies look like?

And, finally, if such pedagogies are possible and desirable, how might they encourage students to "read" and resist institutions like the litigation support company (or the many other types of institutions they may encounter in their lives) as sites of cultural production? Chapters One through Three address these questions through strategic analyses of the intersections of cultural studies and English studies in the U. S. In Chapters Four and Five, the focus shifts to consideration of specific pedagogical practices called cultural rhetorics that are based on theories in British cultural studies and U. S. social-epistemic rhetorics. Through readings of Margaret Atwood's historical novel, *Alias Grace*, and Julie Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust*, these two chapters explore ways textual analyses of historically produced images encourage students to develop a critical perspective to negotiate both academic and non academic institutions.

Cultural Studies, Social-Epistemic Rhetorics and Cultural Rhetorics

This dissertation seeks to put into dialogue two strands of critical scholarship that are marked by widely divergent assumptions about the possibility for oppositional writing pedagogies from within the academic institution. Theorists like Berlin, Michael Vivian, and Karen Fitts, and many others have sought to incorporate assumptions about language found in social-epistemic rhetorics with cultural studies theories. Berlin defines social-epistemic rhetorics as the "study and critique [of] signifying practices in their relation to subject formation within the framework of economic, social and political conditions" (Berlin, *Rhetorics*, 77).

One of the common assumptions of these theorists is that the classroom and textual practices are never politically neutral acts, but that they are implicated in the

struggle for social power. Berlin's conception of cultural studies stresses the critical concepts of ideology and rhetoric where "any examination of a rhetoric must first consider the ways its very discursive structures can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 477).

The pedagogy that emerges from this theory tends to emphasize reading texts for their embedded ideologies, and ignores the very economic and political arrangements to which he refers. In *Rhetorics, Poetics and Cultures*, Berlin spends a great deal of time outlining the "democratic" project of social-epistemic rhetorics that culminates in classroom practices where students read popular texts like *Growing Pains* and *Roseanne* to understand the ideologies inscribed. However, this focus on reading for ideology too often stresses a close reading of the text to the exclusion of an analysis of invisible logics and material considerations shaping the production of knowledges in the first place.

Although he invokes a cultural studies' focus on ideology as a critical concept, Berlin's focus on reading popular texts for resistance does not place resistant ideologies in the context of that "hegemonic" academic institution. Berlin, for instance, ignores a number of questions that might encourage students to consider how what *Roseanne* "means" is dependent upon the contexts in which one reads. There are a series of questions, for instance, that might locate the students reading of the text in the context of the academic classroom. What does it mean to read *Roseanne* in an English class, as opposed to reading Shakespeare? Why might we teach popular television shows in the first place? How is the meaning shaped by the location of the composition classroom within a midwestern university? In late twentieth century? As taught by a male

professor? And how might such readings help students understand the way the production of knowledge in the academy relates to class issues? At the same time, Berlin's use of *Roseanne* invites consideration of popular television as a form of cultural production. What if any problems did Roseanne have in getting the program produced? What significance can we find in the fact that Roseanne is one of the very few programs in recent history that has focused on class as a central issue?

In much of the work on social epistemic rhetorics, there is little attention to "discursive structures" in which students are asked to produce their texts,[1] thereby reinscribing distinctions between the texts students "read" as "sites of resistance" and student texts. Cultural rhetorics expands on this focus on ideology to include a rhetorical analysis of how all textual productions, including students' texts, are locally situated sites of production that can be usefully explored with reference to their disciplinary (and disciplining) functions.[2]

The optimism surrounding cultural studies approaches to composition that we see in Berlin and others contrasts with the conclusions of critics like Sharon Crowley, Henry Giroux and Ma'sud Zavaradeh who argue that the politics of the classroom are shaped by its function within the "hegemonic" academic institution. Giroux and Zavaradeh, for instance, have argued that the location of the writing class within the dominant institution precludes the effective use of cultural studies as oppositional to the institutional politics of the academy.

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[1] The most notable current exception is the recent proliferation of theories involved in "writing and computers." In this growing subgenre of the field, attention is often given to the differences and similarities between computer-mediated images and more "traditional forms."

[2] While Berlin in *Rhetorics, Poetics and Cultures*, spends hundreds of pages detailing different rhetorics and their assumptions about language, he spends very little time addressing the various forms through which "writing" may take and the factors the circumscribe their production.

Sharon Crowley, moreover, has persuasively argued that the institutional function of the writing class as a "mode of surveillance for dominant discourses"[3] mitigates against any attempt to develop "oppositional" pedagogies. In fact, in her controversial *Composition in the University*, Crowley calls for an elimination of the freshmen writing requirement, based on this function of the writing class.

The assumptions of Crowley, Giroux, and Zavaradeh, therefore, are in tension with the more optimistic (about the possibility for oppositional pedagogies) assumptions of people like Berlin and Fitts who, despite the marginalized position of the writing classroom, continue to see in it the possibility for resistant practices.

Why do these scholars, who otherwise share many of the same assumptions about language and its social functions, read the politics of composition and rhetoric and the writing classroom in such different ways? What model of institutional power is assumed in these arguments? And what are the implications of institutional criticism for cultural studies pedagogies? An analysis of the intersections of cultural studies and composition provides some possible answers to these questions. First the different conclusions can be seen as a result of the different contexts of their analysis. While Crowley focuses on composition and rhetoric in terms of its institutional history, particularly in relation to its relationship to literary criticism and humanism, Berlin links his pedagogical practices to theoretical assumptions about language and reality. What is missing in these and other treatments of cultural studies and composition is an exchange that draws on the strengths of cultural studies to develop a social model and of rhetoric to develop reading strategies and pedagogical practices that will function from within the institutional structure of

[3] Crowley ascribes this function to the freshmen writing requirement in *Composition and the University*.

English studies. One promising way of developing such an approach is to build on the emerging field of cultural rhetorics.

Cultural Rhetorics

The version of cultural rhetorics advanced here contributes to two strands of critical thought in the field of composition and rhetoric: social epistemic rhetorics and institutional criticism on the function of the writing course. Before attending to the specific definitions of these two areas, however, it will be useful to place them in the context of other uses of the term cultural rhetorics.

The most influential usage of cultural rhetorics comes from Thomas Rosteck's edited anthology, *At the Intersections: Cultural Rhetorics*, a text which emerges from scholars in speech communications to develop critical readings of popular texts. In addition, a number of arguments stress contemporary similarities between the two fields.[4] Rosteck sums up the position of many of the contributors who view cultural studies and rhetorics as almost identical,

> both aiming to reveal the relationship between expressive forms and social order; both existing within the field of discursive practices; both sharing an interest in how ideas are caused to materialize in texts; both concerned with how these structures are actually effective at the point of

[4] James Aune argues that rhetoric is "especially adept at analyzing political strategy but rather weak at mapping trajectories of popular desire; on the other hand cultural studies is robust in drawing attention to issues of gender, performance, and desire in popular media but rather unconcerned with analyzing conventional political discourse" (7).

'consumption'; and both interested in grasping such textual practices as forms of power and performance. (2)[5]

Despite its focus on readings (in contrast to pedagogical practices), this anthology provides a good framework for understanding some of the critical concepts and theories of the term that can then be adapted to the present concern over the teaching of writing.

In his introduction Rosteck argues that cultural studies counters an overemphasis in rhetoric on "straight textual analysis" and "direct observation of audiences alone" with a "model of how discourse is always a product of wider social formations and reflects necessarily the materialization of the ideology that gave birth to it" (22).[6] James Aune also finds rhetoric lacking in its focus on oratory and public address which, Aune contends, cultural studies complements through a concern with "subcultures" and the "everyday." [7] Maurice Charland, moreover, suggests that cultural studies provides more sophisticated methodologies as alternatives to traditional rhetoric's move from idealism to positivism ("Rehabilitating," 262).[8]

While these arguments provide useful ways to think about cultural studies and rhetoric, they often ignore the shifts and fissures that constitute rhetorical traditions. I am not sure, for example, how epistemological rhetoricians like Vico, Nietzche and Kenneth

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[5] This position is consistent with Gronbeck who, reading the Partisan Review of 1930s, "sees the crucial break coming under the influence of positivism, with the cultural-rhetorical and critical models of intellectual critique being replaced by a social scientific paradigm increasingly interested in description, categorization and prediction, less with political critique and theorization" (5).

[6] It offers a more sophisticated sense of the text-history-audience-critic relationship and also the crucial relationship between texts and critical methodologies, namely, how history and ideology shape readings and critical work"

[7] Aune, suggests that rhetoric has been characterized by an overemphasis on official discourse at the expense of context and history which cultural studies helps address (Aune).

[8] Charland argues that because of this methods, traditional rhetoricians have often "assume[d] a naïve stance towards practices of public discourse as they really occur," and Rosteck adds that "public communication nowadays has changed in ways that render traditional model of intentional persuasive agenda and subject-centered producer of discourse rather quaint" (10).

Burke would fit into Charland's notion of rhetoric as a move from idealism to positivism. Moreover, it is difficult to argue that ancient rhetoricians like Aristotle and Seneca were somehow concerned with "straight textual analysis" to the exclusion of "wider social formations." Notwithstanding this problematic reading of the rhetorical tradition, these theorists give important stress to a lack in many formulations of rhetoric of a social model that locates the text within multiple related contexts.

The picture of cultural rhetorics advanced by Rosteck and others can be usefully enhanced and complicated for a consideration of how we might facilitate oppositional practices in writing within the context of the academy. In contrast to Rosteck, who invokes broad definitions of both cultural studies, however, this usage merges the specific areas of British cultural studies and social-epistemic rhetoric.

Cultural studies is a counterdisciplinary set of theoretical assumptions and institutional practices concerned with the ways that language functions to sustain and resist dominant social formations. The revisions of old Marxism from British school theories stress the cultural politics inherent in the development of orthodoxies. Much work in cultural studies has focused on the role that the academic institution plays in sustaining such orthodoxies as academic disciplines. I stress a precise definition of cultural studies because, as a highly controversial body of critical thought, it has been loosely employed in ways that are not oppositional or counterdisciplinary. Being specific about this definition is particularly important to this dissertation as I argue that U. S. cultural studies and composition have tended to strategically ignore these concerns. In fact, a good deal of the first section of this dissertation (Chapters One through Three) serves to illustrate the process of de-politicization of cultural studies as it has moved from

the British school to the U. S. academy. In recovering both the focus on the production of knowledge and the counterdisciplinary perspective of British cultural studies, then, I assume that full participation in different institutional settings is largely dependent upon the ability to read them rhetorically. I focus on how that which becomes common sense is actually produced and sustained through invisible logics that are supported by the structure of the environment.

This conception of cultural studies converges with the specific area of social epistemic rhetoric characterized by a concern for the social effects of language use in specific contexts. This definition comes from Berlin, who usefully contrasts social-epistemic with "current-traditional" rhetorics, which assume that language functions as a mirror reflection of reality. Social-epistemic rhetorics, which assume that language is opaque and polysemic and therefore what a specific text or speech utterance "means," is dependent upon its specific context and assumes that language shapes perceptions of reality with important implications for the way people are categorized along lines of race, class, gender and other markers of cultural identity.

Cultural Studies, Disciplinarity and the Purpose of the Writing Class

One way to understand the tensions between oppositional pedagogies and the dominant institution, I will argue, is through attention to concepts of disciplinarity and disciplinary formations. Disciplinarity here refers to the organization of knowledge into specific spheres and to the ways that individuals are disciplined through institutions along lines of race, class and gender. Disciplinary formations refer to academic and non-

academic institutional sites through which texts are produced to discipline the individual through the organization of different types of knowledge.

Many in the field of composition and rhetoric have sought to counter its marginalized status by arguing for its separate disciplinary status. In light of counterdisciplinary theories like cultural studies, it is instructive to question whether this approach has not, ironically, maintained problematic assumptions about writing. Without attempting to undo the hard-fought gains towards academic legitimacy, this project considers how the development of a counterdisciplinary orientation from within the field might facilitate critical pedagogies based on social-epistemic rhetorics and cultural studies.

Crowley's argument suggests something of the difficult position involved in institutional criticism in composition and rhetoric. Many of the established theorists in the field, like Crowley, have seen it gain institutional status as a separate discipline. Crowley's texts echoes many other works that attribute the problematic past with composition's relationship to literary criticism and celebrates its gradual distinction from literary criticism.

In asking this question, I am assuming that the field of composition and rhetoric is often characterized by what Gregory Jay refers to as a "disciplinary drive." And while Crowley and others give persuasive testament to the importance of such a drive, it is worthwhile, if presumptuous, to consider the blind spots of such a drive. Because this dissertation is concerned with cultural studies, defined here as a counterdisciplinary set of theories, the question of disciplinarity is particularly germane to its focus. This question, it seems to me, is all the more important if we assume as I do that what counts as

knowledge in the field of composition and rhetoric is often shaped by factors "outside" the field. I am contending that this disciplinary drive is negotiated in multiple related spheres of the work of composition and rhetoric. The first half of this project assumes that the field of composition and rhetoric is not defined only by scholars in the field but that the separation between composition and rhetoric and other fields is a function of an institutional structure that is reinforced at the level of scholarly publications.

It may be objected that a focus on cultural studies is afield from the project of the writing classroom which is, after all, designed to teach people to write. Certainly as a teacher of writing, I believe that writing skills ought to be part of the project of composition and rhetoric. In my teaching, however, I have found that a cultural rhetorical approach is not only consistent with developing skills; it can significantly contribute to them.

At the same time that I view writing skills as a valued objective of the composition course, I think that we need to address that the students' understanding of the specific context of the university, its structure, and its limiting and enabling conditions, contributes much more to student success than is generally assumed. For example, I taught a class for students who had received a 1.5 or lower in the freshmen writing class. I asked the students to write literacy narratives that included their experiences in the freshmen course. I feared that this assignment amounted to something like a forced confession; however, these concerns were allayed when well over half of the students stated that the reason they did not do well had nothing to do with their writing or critical thinking skills. The reason these students did poorly is that they were unable to get up for the 8:00 a.m. class.

What could I have these students do that would somehow help them succeed and develop critical skills? Should I have them fill in time management calendars? Advise them to sleep in their clothes? Buy them alarm clocks? What became apparent was that they simply lacked a certain understanding of the institution itself and their relationship to it. For most of these students the problem became one of considering, more thoughtfully, how to schedule courses.

A more interesting line of development for my purposes is the "Writing Against the Disciplines" which implies a critical interrogation of the disciplinary frames. My own concern here is more consistent with this approach; however, it is critical to address the purpose of such an approach and it is in this focus that I find cultural studies and rhetoric to supply a critical framework for the classroom. In other words, the reasons for "writing against the disciplines" can be many and varied; what I would like to suggest is that such an approach be used in the service of a cultural politics that encourages students to focus on writing skills as a means for effecting social power.

Readings of imaginative fiction encourage students to develop critical perspectives about how institutions organize and maintain common sense notions of knowledge, and the broader social and cultural implications of such practices and strategies for "writing against" such tendencies. In this sense "writing across the disciplines" is an accurate label only to the extent that "disciplines" extend beyond the academic notion of the term to include the different ways that knowledge is organized and maintained in non-academic forums as well as in the academy.

Rhetoric of Research: Reading the Institutionalization of Cultural Studies

As a method of analysis and a source for pedagogy, this conception of rhetoric is concerned with how a text achieves specific effects through narrative forms (Soter 59). In addition, as theorists like Kenneth Burke and James Berlin have argued, rhetoric has been concerned with how these effects can be understood to function in the specific contexts of their production and consumption. A cultural rhetorical method for reading scholarship on cultural studies and English. is concerned with how a text achieves specific effects through narrative forms, the meanings imbedded in the construction of arguments, and the social effects of such arguments (Soter 59).

Many of the responses focus on the immediate institutional context of the academy: "I want to get a good grade," "I want to learn how to be a doctor, lawyer, police officer," to the more general: "I want to learn to communicate better," "be a better person." And, of course, many of the students respond with vocational and professional interests in mind: "I want to get out of here so I can start making money," and, more frankly, "I want to get out of this class so I can get on to the 'real' courses that will make me a doctor, or a lawyer." These responses all bridge the very specific location of the classroom with some sense, however nebulous, of the opportunities that their work in the classroom will provide them in the future.

The institutional, political and social institutions that produce and legitimate certain types of knowledge continue to be suppressed in composition and rhetoric in the interest of establishing composition and rhetoric as a separate discipline. The field of composition and rhetoric is at a place where it can better interrogate the blind spots and limitations of own "disciplinary drive." Doing so, however, requires more attention to

the institutional locations as sites of production--classrooms, committee meetings and scholarly forums--that maintain exclusionary practices.

Analyses of research in the fields of rhetoric and composition and cultural studies have a specific argument in mind: despite much useful criticism on ways to read and the relationship between theory and pedagogy, cultural studies has been incorporated into the U.S. English department, thereby maintaining the traditional, marginalized status of composition and rhetoric. Without a significant disruption of the disciplinary framework of writing and other ways of knowing, composition remains in a marginalized status, and writing practices in the academy will continue to be guided by what Sharon Crowley refers to as the screening process for dominant discourses.

What this type of rhetorical analysis provides that I think is missing in Crowley's now-famous argument for the removal of the universal writing requirement is an emphasis on how academic scholarship itself maintains problematic disciplinary divisions. In this sense, I do not view the texts that I analyze here as primarily representations of or arguments about the institution of English studies. Rather, drawing on Foucault's conception of the state as a condensation of discourses, I assume that these texts are part of what we refer to as the institution of English studies. In saying this, however, I do not mean to suggest that these are the only or the primary components of the academic institution. My orientation to reading texts is also influenced by Raymond Williams' cultural materialism to analyze how texts are situated in the material conditions surrounding their production circulation.

The following texts present a selective history of cultural studies' reception in English studies over the past fifteen years: James Berlin and Michael Vivian's *Cultural*

Studies in the English Classroom (1992); Isaiah Smithson and Nancy Ruff, in *English Studies/Culture Studies* (1994); Karen Fitts and Alan France's *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy* (1995) and Thomas Rosteck's *At the Intersections: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies* (1999). An analysis of these anthologies suggests a gradual process of strategically particularizing cultural studies in ways that removes the critical question of disciplinarity and its political possibilities.

Anthologies have become the primary genre that comes out of the engagement of cultural studies and rhetoric. The central feature of the anthology is to frame a series of discussions in a way that draws on joint assumptions, which also leaves room for "dissensus." Thus, the anthology, in allowing for dissensus under a unifying set of questions or assumptions, appears to be particularly well-suited to discussions of cultural studies. The anthology seems particularly effective for this type of construction of cultural studies. However, as I have suggested in my readings above, it is critical with such texts to consider the very act of framing the debates in the introductions as critical interventions in the debates themselves. While the following analysis draws on many different and often contradictory forms, including contributions to these texts, it is instructive to consider the extent to which the anthology itself as academic form both constrains and enables the arguments that are developed about cultural studies.

Limitations

It is important to clarify that while this project accepts that a primary concern of composition and rhetoric is to help students become "better writers," this project gives limited attention to the debates surrounding specific strategies, approaches, and

assumptions regarding the teaching of writing skills. Although such practices are important, I focus instead on the political and social effects of writing instruction.

In addition, this project does not develop an analysis of the work in British cultural studies over the last ten years. Instead it follows a line of trajectory of the British school through its recent engagement with postcolonial criticism. A more developed treatment of the specific arguments, theorists, and locations of the British school, then, remains an important line of inquiry for future scholarship.

Disciplinarity and the Modern University

The status of composition studies has been hotly contested over the past thirty years, as it has gradually gained disciplinary legitimacy. However, this dissertation looks at the "blind spots" that result from what Gregory Jay has called the "disciplinary drive" in composition and rhetoric (675).

I am using disciplinarity as a trope that draws on Foucault's conception of "disciplining" which he describes in *Discipline and Punish* as a form of "political anatomy of detail" which produces "docile bodies" through the organization of knowledges (137-138).[9] Such disciplinary institutions, as Foucault remarks elsewhere, maintains the necessary link between power and knowledge (*Power/Knowledge* 52).

Understanding the way the university contributes, through its disciplinary formations, to social power, requires attention to the emergence of the modern university. In *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Terry Eagleton associates the development of the bourgeois

[9] For Foucault disciplinarity serves two related functions that are critical to my understanding of contemporary composition and rhetoric. It refers to the organization of knowledge through institutions like the educational system, hospitals and the military (*Discipline* 137-138). Importantly, the organization of knowledge through such institutions also serves to discipline individuals through the "exercise of

subject with the emergence of the Western nation state. The shift from the decentered power of feudalism towards a more centralized national government, Eagleton argues, required a means through which social order can be maintained "hegemonically" (27). While the emergence of nation states in Europe involved coercive mechanisms, the stability of the nation depended on the emergence of "A new kind of human subject– sensitive, passionate, individualist" (27). As a result of this concern over maintaining power, Eagleton argues, there must be a means through which the individual subject will police him/herself. "There is a world of political difference," Eagleton argues, "between a law which the subject really does give to itself, in radical democratic styles, and a decree which still descends from on high but which the subject now 'authenticates'" (27). The difference, Eagleton contends, is that this new bourgeois subject is also capable of developing strategies that are counter to the interests of the ruling power structure.

Sustaining social order of the emerging bourgeois middle-class requires a de-centered means through which the nation state encourages the individual to manage her/his own sense of propriety. "For power to be individually authenticated," Eagleton continues, "there must be constructed within the subject a new form of inwardness which will do the unpalatable work of the law for it, and all the more effectively since that law has now apparently evaporated" (27). Eagleton locates the moment where aesthetics in the form of social control over taste and sensibility becomes a separate sphere of knowledge. That emerges simultaneous to this new bourgeois subject, through "self-policing." The subject in this formulation internalizes an association between his/her liberty with "the historic victory of bourgeois liberty and democracy over the barbarously

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infinitesimal power" and "meticulous control of the operations of the body. . . which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility" (137).

repressive [feudal] state" (27). For Eagleton, control of aesthetics and history, taste, and sensibility are critical to legitimizing the nation state as the locus of power.

Eagleton's analysis links the development of the modern bourgeois subject to the development of separate spheres of knowledge that would impact the disciplinary formation of the modern university. Sharon Crowley enhances Eagleton's analysis by arguing that the focus on aesthetics in the U.S. "stimulated important changes in liberal arts education, which is an important site wherein modern bourgeois subjectivity is developed and disciplined" (*Composition* 32). In essence, the critical importance given the aesthetic in the development of separate spheres as ideological means of maintaining social order is more than coincidental to the notion of individual subjectivity. For Crowley, this association between the emergence of the bourgeois subject, its attachment to the nation state, and its relationship to the development of spheres of knowledge that are ontologically separated, have problematic effects for the study of rhetoric and its development as a disciplining mechanism in the U.S. academy. "This shift in the focus of rhetorical education–away from civic virtue and toward the bourgeois project of self-improvement–coincided with the demise of rhetoric as a field of study" (34).

My point in reading Eagleton and Crowley's conception of the aesthetic and its gradual impact on the field of composition and rhetoric is to establish the links between the modern bourgeois subject, the establishment of academic disciplinary formations, and social politics. For Eagleton and Crowley, the bourgeois subject is interrelated to the sustenance of the nation state. These concerns, moreover, are intimately connected to the development of disciplinary spheres in the modern university which maintain the distinct

function of the field of rhetoric and composition to "discipline and maintain the dominant subjectivity" (Crowley 34).

It is not difficult to understand, given this formulation of the disciplinary structure of the modern university, how the project of cultural studies has maintained a critical perspective towards the established borders of modernity. Yet as my example above suggests, rather than giving over one series of (modern) assumptions for another (cultural studies/postmodern), the classroom is often a location for the interweaving of multiple, often contestatory assumptions about what counts as knowledge–assumptions that reflect competing ideas about the subject.

I will argue that U.S. English studies gradually retreats from the counterdisciplinary focus of British cultural studies. While I have no interest in establishing the British School as an orthodoxy, Chapter Two seeks to strategically recover this movement as a means for rethinking the unique disciplinary situation of contemporary composition and rhetoric in the U.S. Consequently, I will be employing British cultural studies and its movements since the formation of the Birmingham Center. This usage will also draw, like the British School itself, on a wide array of theories, including structuralism, poststructuralism and postcolonial theories.

In an attempt to locate cultural studies in the specific context of U.S. composition and rhetoric, I will focus on the intersections of British cultural studies and the field of rhetoric and composition in the U.S. This intersection involves a call for a focus on what Berlin refers to as "technology[s] for producing consciousness" (*Rhetorics* 108-109) through a "multiplicity of formulations" including media, film, and photography (108-109). The following outline of chapters describes a developing argument that draws on

such a "multiplicity of formulations" in academic scholarship, film and historical fiction, to develop a critical pedagogy.

Chapter One:

No Way Out: Cultural Studies and Disciplinarity in Composition and Rhetoric

This chapter provides both a critical analysis and a literature review of scholarship at the intersections of cultural studies, rhetoric, and composition in the U.S. This chapter argues that the counterdisciplinary focus, associated with British cultural studies, has been shorn away from uses of cultural studies that fit into existing disciplinary formations in English.

This chapter views the intersections of cultural studies and rhetoric and composition in the U.S. as a site of unresolved tension between the modern subject implicit in the disciplinary formation of the contemporary academy, and the post modern challenge to this conception of the subject. Through a rhetorical analysis of academic texts on the "intersections" of cultural and English studies in the U.S., I argue that a important feature of cultural studies in U.S. English studies has been the gradual elimination of the counterdisciplinary perspective. I contend that scholarship on cultural studies in U.S. English programs leaves the disciplinary subjects (read literary critics, rhetoric and composition, anthropology, sociology) at the same time that it seeks to critique the notion of subjectivity upon which they are based. Moreover, I argue that the counterdisciplinary focus associated with British cultural studies has been shorn away from uses of cultural studies.

Chapter Two:

Recovering British Cultural Studies and the Critique of the Disciplinary Subject

Reading British cultural studies through early "founding texts" of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E. P. Thompson, and its engagement with structuralism, and poststructural theory, this chapter argues that the counterdisciplinarity challenge to the structure of modern university is integral to the British school. Moreover, this chapter argues that cultural studies supplies a framework for rethinking composition and rhetoric U.S. through the development of a counterdisciplinary perspective.

Chapter Three: Disciplinary Tendencies: Debates over Literature in Composition

This chapter analyzes the Tate-Lindemann debates over the uses of literature in composition as emblematic of a tendency in composition and rhetoric to ignore the possibilities of cultural studies theories that might suggest a strategic use of imaginative fiction. Since many of the contributions to these debates are based on histories, this chapter becomes a strategic meta-history that reveals 1.) that the tendency to "read" the history of rhetoric and composition in opposition to literary criticism is often based on a "disciplinary drive" in U.S. composition and rhetoric, and 2.) that cultural studies, provides a means for thinking of a counterdisciplinary orientation. This chapter concludes with an argument for imaginative fiction that illustrates a counterdisciplinary orientation from with the dominant institution.

Chapter Four:

Towards a Cultural Rhetorics for U.S. Composition and Rhetoric

Chapter Four shifts the focus from scholarly texts on cultural studies and composition to the emergent subfield of cultural rhetorics. First this chapter argues that these two bodies of research, like the work on cultural studies and composition, too often ignore the critical question of disciplinarity. It then seeks to reclaim a cultural rhetorics with a counterdisciplinary perspective through a cultural rhetorical reading of Atwood's novel. This chapter puts the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three into dialogue with scholarship in rhetoric as a means for developing a counterdisciplinary approach to work in the field. It focuses specific attention on the work of Kenneth Burke and James Berlin as offering promising frameworks for understanding rhetoric and writing as social discourses that must mediate multiple institutional functions through various forms.

Chapter Five
Cultural Rhetorics, Visual Rhetorics and Classroom Practices in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*

This chapter serves two purposes. First, it demonstrates visual rhetorics of a postcolonial film as a specific type of cultural rhetoric that extends the trajectory of British cultural studies to postcolonial criticism. Second, this chapter explores pedagogical practices that de-center writing as a specific mechanism of communication to be read in relation to other forms.

A story about the last days of African American Gullahs living off the coast of South Carolina before they migrated to the mainland, *Daughters of the Dust* places various forms of representation (writing, film, and photography) side by side to dramatize

their limitations in telling the story of the Gullahs. These dramatizations, moreover, are linked to empirical science and the notion of progress through the character of Mr. Snead, a mainlander who has come with his photographic gear to document the historic day of migration. The shifting narrative perspectives and disorienting use of visual imagery create a pastiche weaving together the stories of multiple characters–living, dead and unborn. I argue that *Daughters of the Dust* constitutes a cultural rhetoric in its focus on how class and race-based subjectivities are constructed through multiple textual forms, legitimated through empirical science. Specifically, *Daughters of the Dust* provides excellent examples of how various forms of writing have been attached to empirical science to create what Foucault refers to as "regimes of truth." Dash's film, for instance, constitutes a cultural rhetoric that dramatizes that the historical record of 20th century African American Gullah's was created through writing, photography, and early cinema and scientific assumptions about what these technologies can represent. In this formulation writing is viewed not as a mirror through which to discover an empirical truth, but as one of many technologies through which subjectivities are created.

Chapter One

No Way Out:

Cultural Studies and Disciplinarity in Composition and Rhetoric

> In order for cultural studies to find an audience of U.S. teachers and students, workers in the area will need to construct programs and practices with a uniquely American flavor.
>
> James Berlin and Michael Vivian, *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom*, p. xiii

> It is unlikely that the disciplinary structures and mechanisms of universities will disappear in the near future. . . it would be a mistake to locate cultural studies within them.
>
> Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals*, p. 155

At the same time I worked at the litigation support company, I started teaching in an English department that promoted a "cultural studies" approach to composition. The course I taught, English 110, employed theories of James Berlin, Susan Miller and George Trimbur into a pedagogy that would encourage "critical thinking" about the texts and institutions that shaped student lives. Diana George and John Trimbur's *Reading Culture* was particularly well-suited, I believed, for a cultural studies approach because it featured "reading and writing assignments . . . designed to promote a critical distancing" (xv). Students in the course read popular texts and wrote essays to "observe and evaluate

as well as participate in the everyday life of contemporary America"(xv). The course, then, had what I perceived to be two purposes: 1.) to develop reading and writing skills, and 2.) to use these skills as they negotiated their places within social formations.

With these ideas in mind, I entered English 110, a class full of 18-year-old freshmen, went over the syllabus, and began the ongoing process of assessing theories about composition pedagogy against what was going on in the classroom. From the first day on, when students nodded at terms like "culture" and "power," I believed that this course was encouraging students not only to understand how individuals are "written" along lines of race, class and gender, in popular discourse; I was also convinced that the students were developing the skills to analyze and resist such tendencies. Students, for example, read and wrote about newspaper articles on the controversy surrounding rap music and the song "Cop Killer," focusing on racialized assumptions embedded in the texts, and they used these texts to write about (and against) the way they are "written" as members of a particular subculture.

The next semester, I optimistically took on an evening section of English 225, the second course in the university's required sequence. In stark contrast to the demographics of English 110, English 225, which was part of a "Continuing Education" program, was much more diverse in student age, ethnicity, work experience, and academic background. These differences did little to change my confidence from the previous semester, and I began the course by rehearsing a syllabus similar to the one I used in English 110.[10] As I read the course description, however, I immediately began to notice signs of concerns on the students' faces. Finally, a member of the class, a returning student in her fifties, gave

[10] The primary difference between the two courses was that English 225 required students to read a novel and to write a research paper as preparation for their other academic requirements.

voice to the discontent: "You *are* going to teach us how to write, aren't you? " Before I had a chance to answer, other students chimed in with questions: "Am I going to be penalized if my papers aren't political?" and "Are you going to help us prepare for the proficiency test?"[11] I'm sure that my responses reflected how ill equipped I was to engage the students' legitimate concerns about the class.[12] Throughout the term, the students encouraged me to consider more thoroughly how the course "agenda" was already prescribed by factors beyond my control, not the least of which was the specter of the timed, proficiency exam which was assessed on the basis of clarity, grammar and organization.

Part of the confusion surrounding my approach to English 225, was the result of competing assumptions about the "disciplinary" functions of composition studies. Many of the students in the class objected to what they viewed as an overtly political approach to a course that was ostensibly supposed to be about writing. While I have no reason to believe that they necessarily objected to the politics of the course, they certainly called me to task for diverting attention away to the task at hand: developing writing skills. This perception maintained, moreover, even though we spent a good deal of time writing, revising, and rewriting papers that would, notwithstanding the course "content," help prepare students for academic discourse.

The confusion, I have come to suspect, was the result of a dissonance between internalized assumptions about disciplinarity. This tension was apparent in the students'

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[11] After taking the two required courses, students were required to take a proficiency test. If they failed the test, they were required to retake English 225.

[12] The difference in attitudes between the two courses was partly a function of course demographics. Whereas English 110 was made up of 18 and 19-year-old freshman, this second course was an evening course with the designation "continuing education." In addition to a few "traditional" sophomore students--19-year-olds in their second year of college--English 225 was comprised of a wide variety of student ages

reactions to reading Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* and Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*. While many of the students enjoyed the texts, they continued to express concerns that these readings–which I assume they associated with a literature course–would detract from time we could have spent working on ways to pass the proficiency exam.

English 225, therefore, brought to light two important concerns that I have since come to identify with the way that knowledge is produced and organized in academic research on the teaching of writing. Reactions against literary texts and political content created tensions, in part, because of a few preconceived notions of a writing class as skills-based. The urgency surrounding concerns about the proficiency exam served as a tacit acknowledgement that the academic institution itself was concerned with disciplining students to conform to a specific type of discourse.

I do not mean to suggest here that these students were somehow naïve about what ought to be the real focus of the writing class. These students had very good reasons to be concerned about developing writing skill and quickly at that, and I take it as axiomatic that writing abilities ought to be of primary concern to the writing class and a good deal of other course. However, if scholars and teachers are going to focus on the politics of their practices, it's better to understand and communicate how such practices are mediated by the knowledge that is organized along disciplinary concerns.

Cultural studies and its convergence with rhetoric provide an excellent example of how disciplinarity, as one of the primary ways the academy organizes knowledge, does the cultural work of dividing

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and backgrounds ranging from the 50 year-old social worker who was returning to school for the first time in over 20 years, to a 16-year-old Indian woman just entering college.

Counterdisciplinarity in the Classroom

Recovering the concerns of British cultural studies have helped me think through many of the questions that arose in my teaching of English 110 and English 225 and in subsequent classes. I began by questioning why counterdisciplinarity is a key concept and whether it could provide a means for developing a critical pedagogy that focuses on the formation of knowledge.

Fortunately there have been a number of scholarly attempts in recent years to merge cultural studies, writing instruction and related disciplinary headings like English studies, literary criticism and speech and communication. Analysis of these works goes a long way towards understanding the way power functions at the site of the production of knowledge--through the publication of anthologies--to maintain firm distinctions between writing instruction and other fields, including literary criticism (note on Berlin and Vivian). In terms of institutional politics, the assumption that writing instruction takes place in a separate discipline called rhetoric and composition, might actually maintain its subordinate position.

In addressing the concerns over disciplinarity, this chapter assumes as James Berlin and Michael Vivian proposed in 1991 that cultural studies signals a shift in the way we think about disciplinary borders. However, I will argue that such is the nature of contemporary English studies that the convergence with cultural studies has requires ignoring the focus on disciplinarity in British cultural studies. How could such strategies have helped disrupt naturalized disciplinary assumptions that often make composition function as a "screening mechanism" for dominant discourses? In what ways can we

rethink the relationship between scholarship and pedagogy to imagine new disciplinary configurations?

It is clear, from my description of English 225, in particular, that there was a tension, from the outset, between the expressed intention of the instructor to facilitate critical thinking about cultural processes in the formation of identities, and the vocational and academic interests of the students. In rethinking this tension, however, I am less inclined to accept the disciplinary "fact" and to simply incorporate some cultural studies ideas into it. Rather, in my approach to classes like English 225 and 110, I have become increasingly convinced of the need to mediate between these interests.

In other words, while I am not inclined to view U.S. cultural studies as somehow separate from the radical critique of disciplinarity, I am equally concerned with the way the structure of the academy itself shapes what counts as knowledge. But rather than settle for this as an impasse that cannot be effectively addressed, I would like to suggest that compositionists can turn to British cultural studies, if not for an orthodoxy or grand narrative, then for strategic practices that continue to disrupt and dislocate the disciplinary structures and forms that shape their experiences in the contemporary academy. How this could be done specifically will be the subject of later chapters.

Fashioning U.S. cultural studies as an ideal that replaces the present configuration of English studies, however, requires a radical disruption of the dominant model which I will suggest continues to privilege literary criticism. Such a disruption must attend, I will argue, to the problematic effects of the "disciplinary drive" in the field of composition and rhetoric. With this idea in mind, compositionists can seek to recover the critical thrust of British cultural studies to develop practices and criticism that supports the

counterdisciplinary orientation to the modern university. The following chapters therefore, are directed at first recovering British cultural studies and then putting these theories, along with their developments in the U.S., to work in analysis of scholarship in the field and in the development of pedagogical practices.

Pedagogy and Disciplinarity

As my experiences in English 110 and 225 suggest, cultural studies raises a number of pedagogical questions: Is there any space for oppositional pedagogical practices within the U.S. academy? Does cultural studies supply a way of thinking about the classroom that might complicate the assumption, advanced by Sharon Crowley and others, that certain writing classrooms are determined more by their function for the institution that by what goes on in the classroom? And what, finally, does it mean to be oppositional in the U.S. writing classroom?

Berlin and Vivian suggest a critical distinction that is useful for considering the pedagogical implications of composition and rhetoric. In their introduction they state that

> [A]ll the essayists assembled here would not agree on this version of cultural studies in all its particulars. They would, however, probably concur that the classroom represents a site for working out the theoretical, practical, and political issues identified in the current debates over English and cultural studies. The classroom is a proving ground for a reformulation of the relationship between theory and practice, the two interacting dialectically in constant revision of each other. (*Cultural Studies* xii)

Composition pedagogy as a subgenre of the field of composition and rhetoric constitutes one such sphere and it is instructive, if we are to attempt to address the possibility of oppositional pedagogies (and the definition of oppositional in the U.S.) to narrow the focus of our reading.

However, as I have suggested in my reading of France and Fitts' *Left Margins*, one of the challenges facing cultural studies in the U.S. is a tendency to incorporate specific theories into the sphere of pedagogy, without attention to the important institutional factors that shape what it means and how it impacts social politics. As a way to address this concern, then, it is important to consider how the politics of writing pedagogy are mediated by the academic institution. Therefore, it is particularly instructive to read pedagogical arguments in terms of how what is done in the classroom also speaks to that which is "outside" the classroom.

Many formulations of cultural studies assume a radical challenge to the disciplinary structure of the modern university. Cultural studies as theorists like James Berlin, Michael Vivian and Alan France argue, is particularly well-suited to the field of rhetoric and composition because it challenges disciplinary structures which have historically marginalized composition and rhetoric. In terms of the professional fields that constitute English studies, Berlin and Vivian, envision a much closer relationship between literary criticism and rhetoric and composition than presently exists. For Berlin and Vivian, cultural studies encourages us to re-think English studies that "will [continue to] address the distinguishing features of rhetorical and poetic texts, but it will do so on the basis of the writing and reading practices involved in each" (xi). This stress on the similarities between the rhetorical and the poetic, both viewed as "culturally indicated,

historically specific codes" suggests a change in the way English studies views the field of composition and rhetoric as a profession and in their pedagogical approaches.

A disruption in the way we view the hierarchical distinctions between these areas would also help counter the marginalization of composition and rhetoric. In contrast, however, a number of theorists such as Giroux and Zavaradeh have argued against the possibility of cultural studies functioning "within" the academic institution. These theorists argue that the disciplinary formation of the academy itself is antithetical to the political project of cultural studies, which should find alternative locations and methods for its work.

With the passage of time since these early arguments were proferred, we are now at a juncture where we may gain a better sense of the potentialities and limitations of cultural studies approaches to composition and rhetoric in the U.S. academy. In this chapter I read the recent history of the convergence of cultural studies and composition and rhetoric as a way to address the two assumptions about the possibilities and limitations of cultural studies *in* English studies.

If we assume with Giroux and Zavaradeh that cultural studies can only function as oppositional if it remains "outside" the U. S. academy, we would expect attempts to employ it in the U.S. to result in its incorporation into into the existing disciplinary framework of U.S. English studies. On the other hand, if cultural studies, as Berlin and Vivian claim, presents the possibility for rethinking English studies in ways that provide opportunities for resistant practices from "within" the academy, we would expect recent scholarship to reflect shifts in the professional status and pedagogical approaches in composition and rhetoric that employs it.

In this chapter I will argue that, much as Giroux and Zavaradeh might have predicted, cultural studies has been incorporated into the existing disciplinary structure of English studies, thereby reducing its political effect. However, I part company with these theorists in their suggestion that resistance from "within" is not a possibility, and I conclude by recommending that future uses of cultural studies avoid these theorists tendency to assume and "inside/outside" notion of institutional power.

Because the perceptions and practices of the field of composition and rhetoric are often shaped by factors outside its influence, I will have not limited my research to what scholars in the field have to say about composition and rhetoric. Instead I read a number of text on cultural studies and English studies. Approaching the "intersections" through this broader perspective, I believe, ultimately focuses attention on the often ignored impact that publication practices in the field have in maintaining essentialized borders between the field of composition and rhetoric and other fields. This tendency, I will argue, is most apparent in differeing assumptions about cultural studies "means" in scholarship in the field of composition and rhetoric and literary criticism.

In the first section, entitled "Disciplining Cultural Studies in U.S. English Studies," I will ask what impact cultural studies has on the way that composition and rhetoric is regarded in relation to literary criticism. The reason for this focus is that composition and rhetoric has been historically marginalized in relation to literary criticism in ways that maintain problematic writing practices. The second section, "Cultural Studies Theory, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Disciplinarity," then focuses on specific arguments about the relationship between theory and practice, asking what impact cultural studies has on how we view the different types of labor involved in

English studies. The assumption that informs this section is that cultural studies, as I am using the term, provides a framework from which to challenge the historical distinctions between theory and practice, both "within" and "outside" the field of composition and rhetoric. Finally, I argue in the concluding section, "Cultural Studies, U.S. English Studies and the Question of Disciplinarity," that cultural studies in U.S. English studies has been characterized by a retreat from the anti-disciplinary focus of early forms of cultural studies.

Disciplining Cultural Studies in English

As I have suggested above, debates in the late 1980s and early 1990s over the usefulness of cultural studies in the U.S. English department reveal competing perceptions about the political possibilities of academic work. Giroux's argument in *Teachers as Intellectuals* (1988) takes a very pessimistic view of how cultural studies might support "oppositional" politics from "within" U.S. universities and colleges. For Giroux, the problem lies in the incongruity between the structure of the U.S. academy based on scientific assumptions about knowledge and culture and those posited by cultural studies. This scientific bias of the modern university, according to Giroux, suggests to students that culture has "already formed" and can be "described in an essentialist manner" through scientific models designed "to describe" and "accumulate knowledge about a culture" (150). These assumptions are antithetical to the cultural studies notion of culture in "the process of transformation" (150).

For Giroux the tensions between cultural studies and the U.S. academy operate in the structure of the university through its traditional disciplinary formation. Scientific

assumptions, maintained in traditional academic disciplines, are maintained through borders between different disciplines that imply static, naturalized ideas about culture. Cultural studies as an "anti-disciplinary" set of theories must, for Giroux, function at a critical distance from such disciplines or be incorporated into them. Cultural studies, he argues, within the academy is possible only through "movement away from our de-contextualized *conception of disciplinary practices*" (150). For Giroux, then, the political project of cultural studies is not possible until such a movement away has occurred, and its success is dependent upon first developing "counter-institutions" (155).

Like Giroux's comments on cultural studies, James Berlin and Michael Vivian's *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom* (1992) maintains a similar focus on the critical question of disciplinarity. Assuming that cultural studies theories might help address the "crises" in English studies, Berlin and Vivian stress that their notion of cultural studies "was strongly influenced by the example of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies" (vii). For Berlin and Vivian, the British school along with other "postmodern" theories challenges foundational assumptions that, historically, have often separated the rhetorical from the poetic. What cultural studies "means" is nothing less than a radical rethinking of the disciplinary framework of English studies to reflect the assumption of cultural studies that "reading and writing are interchangeable because both are interpretive; that is, both are generative of meaning rather than simply activities in the transcription or reception of information" (x). For Berlin and Vivian, the critique of disciplinarity is crucial to the politics of cultural studies insofar as it provides a way to redress the asymmetrical power relationship between the discipline of composition and rhetoric and literary criticism. The emphasis on disciplinarity, moreover, is further

suggested by the fact that Berlin and Vivian devote the first half of the text to essays on curricular reform.

Giroux's argument suggests the impossibility of a counterdisciplinary cultural studies functioning within the U.S. academy. The political potential of cultural studies, for Giroux, is dependent upon its challenge of disciplinary structures. Since no such disruption is likely to happen "in the near future," the entire project depends on movement "outside" the academy (152).

Giroux's notion of power residing within a specific sphere, namely "inside" the academy, however, maintains a notion of borders as "already formed" that cultural studies seeks to critique. This conception of power can be usefully contrasted to Foucault's conception of power as a strategy. In contrast to the inside/outside dichotomy upon which Giroux's depends, Foucault argues in *Power/Knowledge* that "power *is* 'always already there', and that one is never 'outside' it, that there are no 'margins' for those who break with the system to gambol in" (141). This conception of power does not mean, however, that "one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what" (142). Instead Foucault offers the idea of power as a strategy of which resistance is a part. Foucault usefully offers a model of power as strategy where

> there are no relations of power without resistances. . . .[R]esistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies. (140)

Foucault's analysis is similar to the Gramscian notion of hegemony where all forms of power constitute both hegemonic and counterhegemonic practices. In these models it is more useful to think, once we acknowledge that resistance itself is part of the process through which power is used, about how to develop counterstrategies.

Because Giroux assumes a model of power based on one's location relative to the dominant institution (as either inside or outside), he effectively removes any vantagepoint from which cultural studies might maintain a political project. In the end, it seems to me, Giroux's reliance on the inside/outside spheres of political action depends on the conventional logic which cultural studies seeks to critique. Yet I suspect that this concern is one of the reasons that the question of disciplinarity has been elided in scholarship on cultural studies and composition. Giroux's early concerns suggest a need to theorize a U.S. cultural studies from within the academic institution. However, what has occurred instead is a retreat from the question of disciplinarity.

Isaiah Smithson and Nancy Ruff's *English Studies/Culture Studies* is similarly concerned with the implications of cultural studies; however, Smithson and Ruff present dramatically different assumptions about what both English studies and cultural studies mean. The title of the text, they assert in their introduction, "denotes a shift from the New Critical conception of the text and reader as separable from each other and their culture to an affirmation that texts, writers, readers and culture are intertwined" (1). This focus on English studies through New Criticism is developed, moreover, through "a long, complicated history" (3). Identified with references to people like Gerald Graff, Terry Eagleton and Richard Ohmann, Smithson and Ruff include elliptical references to composition and rhetoric as a marginalized location within English departments. Thus,

Smithson and Ruff both call attention to the disciplinary tensions *within* English studies at the same time that they attach them to the narrative of literary criticism through New Criticism. What remains undeveloped in this conception is how the field of composition and rhetoric, with its own narratives, fits into this construction of English studies. In other words, while Smithson and Ruff present an umbrella conception of English studies, which should include some discussion of composition and rhetoric, that also seek to subsume the field under the narrative of literary criticism.

In contrast to Berlin and Vivian who focus on what cultural studies might do to the way we think about the rhetorical and the poetic, Smithson and Ruff focus most of their attention on cultural studies relationship to literary criticism. Smithson and Ruff argue that, as a response to the shifting demographics of post World War II U.S., American New Criticism has outlived its usefulness. Just as New Criticism served as a response to changing cultural circumstance, culture studies can be viewed as an appropriate response to new demographics (11-12).

This rather one-sided treatment of English studies is consistent with the way Smithson and Ruff construct the phrase in the other side of their title. "The shift within English studies, towards culture studies has," according to Smithson and Ruff,

> various and sometimes conflicting intellectual sources. Marxism, feminism, and cultural critique are major influences. Multiculturalism and university ethnic studies programs are additional significant sources of ideas and information. And the British cultural studies movement is yet another significant influence behind changing conceptions of English studies, in the United States.(2)

In fact, it is this diversity of perspectives involved in these movements that compels Smithson and Ruff to make the strategic move from the more common "cultural studies" to "culture studies." They acknowledge, for instance, that "some teachers and scholars in the United States work consciously out of the British cultural studies tradition and are comfortable with the term *cultural studies*" (Italics Smithson and Ruff's, 2). In an effort to expand their operating definition, Smithson and Ruff suggest that the term also refers to "[o]thers [who] have their roots in multiculturalism or other traditions and seem unaware of, or uninterested in, the Birmingham Center movement. Thus 'culture studies' . . . seems a useful way to refer to the several theories of culture that influence the direction of English studies today" (2).

Thus, Smithson and Ruff's choice of terms is guided by a laudable attempt to speak to the specific institutional and intellectual traditions emerging out of U.S. English studies. In addition to suturing culture studies to the narrative of literary criticism, Smithson and Ruff, in sharp contrast to Giroux, argue for the inevitability of cultural studies' institutionalization. "Profound change," they argue, "requires its own institutionalization. If culture studies were dependent solely on a small number of individuals for its definition, continuation, and expansion—rather than on academic institutions—concern with culture would remain a controversial logo sewn on the surface rather than become a part of the fabric of English studies" (3). Claiming culture studies as a laudatory effect of change, Smithson and Ruff nonetheless warn against the dangers of institutionalization, particularly on the kind of dissent that they hope culture studies can enact (3).

It is important to note, however, that in attaching culture studies to a narrative of New Criticism, Smithson and Ruff effectively broaden the field of literary criticism while they ostensibly maintain the marginalization of composition and rhetoric. In other words, Smithson and Ruff's conception of English studies is notably inconsistent with the counterdisciplinary argument advanced by the British School. And while there is good reason to challenge the dominance of the British School as the only or best conception of cultural studies, it is equally important to identify the disciplinary conceits at work in this broader conception of culture studies. In fact, it could be argued that the primary effect of Smithson and Ruff's opting for New Criticism–as a body of criticism that was based on its disciplinary difference from other fields–as an "example" for English studies/culture studies, is to sustain the disciplinary divisions that have supported literary criticism to the exclusion of the field of composition and rhetoric.

Robert Con Davis' "A Dialogue on Institutionalizing Cultural Studies" (1994) signals a retreat from the problem of disciplinarity. Con Davis frames this discussion with Gerald Graff, Janice Radway, and Gita Rajan, by suggesting that, in the mid-1990s, it is no longer as important to keep rehearsing definitions of what cultural studies is and where it came from. "It is more appropriate now," he suggests, "to talk about the early track record and the functioning of cultural studies *as an institutional program*" (25). In an effort to understand the "separate and ongoing developments of cultural studies in the United States" (30), Con Davis usefully argues that it is important to avoid tendencies to equate it with British cultural studies. Holding too closely to any single definition of cultural studies, Con Davis states, " would be especially misleading" because "there's so much dissent within the ranks, disputes between the philosophical and political left and

right, between the theoretical and the more overtly political, and between cultural studies and ethnic studies programs" (26). Con Davis' argument can be viewed as a sort of compromise through which new perspectives are fit under the expanded "umbrella" that cultural studies has become, without the kind of critique that might undermine the disciplinary structure and logic that sustains the traditional politics of the institution. It appears that what replaces the rather thorny question of disciplinary politics, in Con Davis' framework, is a sort of celebration of dissensus that, we can assume, takes place through the expansion of existing disciplines. It is not difficult to see in this formulation, however, a movement away from the concerns that marginalized fields like composition and rhetoric have. If Giroux's formulation gives composition and rhetoric no place from "inside" with which to critique the intransigent institution, Con Davis simply removes the question from the table.

The question of disciplinarity is never far from the surface in discussions of cultural studies. Towards the end of the "Dialogue," for instance, Con Davis shifts focus from analysis of what cultural studies has been to what it will do in the future. Janice Radway in particular expresses her concern that cultural studies not become "disciplined" in the future in the sense that it becomes institutionalized "within the current structure of the academy" (40). Notwithstanding its "current good effects," Radway expresses extreme skepticism that cultural studies can be institutionalized "without either gutting cultural studies of its disruptive potential or entirely changing the disciplinary divisions and legitimating ideologies presently underwriting most academic research" (40-41). Radway's comments provide some insight into the differences between Giroux's construction of cultural studies and that which Con Davis presents in the "Dialogue." On

one hand, Radway's concern over the disciplinary problems facing cultural studies in the U.S. are almost identical to Giroux's concerns. Giroux, in contrast, links the political potential of cultural studies with antidisciplinarity.

One important reason for the different perspectives is that Giroux and Radway are operating with different conceptions of cultural studies and its relationship to the British School. Whereas Giroux's argument reflects the British School's concern over orthodoxy, Radway stresses the importance of resisting the " tendency to locate the sole origins of contemporary cultural studies in the classrooms and corridors of Birmingham" (30). But while she does not want to link cultural studies in 1994 too closely to the British School, Radway does acknowledge a genealogy of sorts. "Certainly, a clear line of descent can be drawn from the early work at the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies to a particular body of work carried out under the rubric of cultural studies. But it is my belief that the Birmingham project constituted only on efflorescence of a complex, diffuse, conflicted set of social practices" (30). In saying this, Radway echoes Con Davis's recasting of cultural studies as a "general umbrella" or "rubric" under which a number of alternative concerns can be addressed including, as is indicated in the dialogue, concerns over postcolonial theoretical representation, specific institutional uses of cultural studies in the U.S. and the increasingly heated debates over questions of cultural studies political project.

These two constructions of cultural studies are illustrative of how the traditional logic of disciplinarity continues to inform responses. Giroux's cautionary remarks, echoed six years later by Radway, are based on the assumption that what cultural studies "means" is inseparable from the question of opposition to disciplinary traditions. While

Con Davis might well agree that this is one conception of cultural studies, which can be traced to the British School, the "Dialogue" reflects a tendency to bracket off questions of disciplinarity that were central to the Birmingham project. Radway's response to where cultural studies is going, however, reinvigorates the focus on disciplinarity, but only after more analysis of how "contingent forms of cultural practice can be embodied in curricular reforms and institutional reorganization." In the meantime, for Radway, it would be best for "practitioners of cultural studies [to] forge political alliances across disciplinary boundaries and even over the walls surrounding our academic quadrangles" (40-41).

This tendency to avoid questions of disciplinarity is even more pronounced in Karen Fitts and Alan France's *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy* (1995). Describing the texts as an extension of the pedagogy section of Berlin and Vivian's earlier work, France and Fitts focus specifically on how an interdisciplinary cultural studies can help rethink pedagogy. While they acknowledge the "intense debate" and "swirl of contention" surrounding cultural studies "outside their classrooms" (xi), France and Fitts opt in *Left Margins* to emphasize how cultural studies is uniquely positioned to address the discipline of composition. In stark contrast, in fact, to the counterdisciplinary concerns of people like Giroux, France and Fitts emphasize the unique features of composition and rhetoric that are common to cultural studies. The two areas, they argue, are joined by a "family relationship" as "trans- or post disciplinary fields of study" (xiii). Aware of the broader social and institutional politics that have surrounded the question of cultural studies, France and Fitts acknowledge that the "contributors give scant attention in these pages to the swirl of contention outside their

classrooms" (xi). This lack of attention to questions of disciplinarity, however, are not viewed as a problem for France and Fitts who refer readers concerned with such questions to the "many fine works that explore this terrain" by authors like Grossberg, Nelson and Easthope (xii).

While the texts to which France and Fitts refer, Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler's Cultural Studies and Anthony Easthope's, are useful for understanding basis tenets of cultural studies, they do little to explore the questions surrounding the exchange specific to composition, rhetoric and cultural studies. In the absence of such analysis, cultural studies is in danger of becoming depoliticized as another "rhetorical strategy" or cluster of assumptions that shapes the content of the classroom, but does little to disrupt the perception of writing instruction and scholarship. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the works France and Fitts cite as references stress the counterdisciplinary assumptions of British cultural studies. At the very least, a reading of Grossberg, Nelson and Easthope would seriously question the merits of the type of incorporation that France and Fitts undertake. As I have suggested, British cultural studies, always wary of attempts to co-opt it into existing disciplinary formations, is a difficult match for the disciplinary tendencies reflected in France and Fitts' attempt to claim unique similarities. And while these authors do provide a good reference for some of the theoretical questions and "swirl of debates" surrounding cultural studies, they devote very little attention to the specific circumstances surrounding the disciplinary and anti-disciplinary movements in the field of composition and rhetoric.

What I find particularly interesting about these anthologies is that they represent a narrative of retreat from the questions of disciplinarity that were so critical to the British

school. The centrality of disciplinary questions in Giroux and Berlin and Vivian is in sharp contrast with France and Fitts and Smithson and Ruff, who seem to suggest a version of cultural studies that is applicable only to practices within the classroom.

In one sense my reading of cultural studies and composition and rhetoric can be viewed as a response to Radway's call for more analysis of the implications of disciplinarity. I am, however, interested in looking at the British School and its specific arguments as useful for composition studies in its employment of cultural studies. In so doing, however, I am less concerned with imposing a set standard or definition of cultural studies. In fact, I can readily agree with the various and sometimes contradictory uses to which it has been put by Con Davis, Giroux and others. The focus on counterdisciplinary assumptions of cultural studies is particularly important to scholars in composition and rhetoric because it is a reflection of the institutional power of the academy itself that has often relegated composition to the role of a skills course shaped more by perceptions of its institutional function (to make better writers) than by its own political orientation towards the traditional academy (Crowley). Recovering British cultural studies, from the perspective of composition and rhetoric as disciplinary "other," then, is an attempt to recover the crucial counterdisciplinary edge without being mired in the inside/outside dichotomies that render it impossible.

One of the primary assumptions about cultural studies and composition is that it can help challenge the hierarchical separation between pedagogy, theory, and cultural criticism. It is through this emphasis on the pedagogical that both Berlin and Vivian structure their text in two sections: "Cultural Studies Programs" and "Cultural Studies Courses." Invoking critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire, Ira Shor and Henry Giroux,

Berlin and Vivian characterize the relationship between theory and pedagogy in terms of two areas "interacting dialectically in constant revision of each other" (xii). The classroom in this formulation then becomes a central place or "site for working out the theoretical, practical and political issues identified in the current debates over English and cultural studies" (xii). Importantly, for Berlin and Vivian, the classroom is not the only place for assessing the politics of English and cultural studies; it is also a "proving ground for a reformulation of the relationship between theory and practice" (xii).

This notion of the classroom as both a testing ground for theory and also a way of rethinking the relationship between theory and pedagogy is also apparent in France and Fitts' *Left Margins*. In contrast to Berlin and Vivian, for whom pedagogical descriptions and arguments are placed next to theoretical arguments, France and Fitts, with their emphasis on the pedagogical, seek to "reverse the invidious hierarchy that locates theory as an elite (read 'masculine') intellectual prerogative and classroom practice as private (read 'feminine') sphere" (xi). For France and Fitts, like Berlin and Vivian, pedagogy is an important location of "social praxis of (too often empty or 'unrealized') rhetorical theory and cultural criticism" (xi).

Giroux takes this focus on the pedagogical for cultural studies a step further, arguing in "Who Writes in a Cultural Studies Class? or, Where is the Pedagogy?" for thinking of "pedagogy as a central aspect of cultural studies and writing as a pedagogical practice " (3). Giroux's argument, like the work of Berlin and Vivian and France and Fitts, is strategic in the sense that he is ultimately interested in providing a rationale for inserting pedagogical concerns into discourses on cultural studies (4).

In contrast, Frank Farmer argues that the theoretical language of cultural studies tends to reinscribe the distance between privileged academic discourse and the "everyday" discourse of students. Specifically, Farmer cites his students' responses to theoretical essays by John Fiske and Mark Crispen Miller. His students' negative reactions to the language in these essays, for Farmer, support his comparison between cultural studies and elitist notions of ideology in the Frankfurt school that situate the critic in privileged distance from the "irrevocably degraded or commodified" cultural forms of mass culture (qtd. in Farmer, 194).

The "central dilemma" of any cultural studies approach to writing, for Farmer, is to make "a liberatory agenda comport with a distinctive, seemingly privileged way of knowing" (186). The problem is that the theoretical language of cultural studies is in danger of reproducing a "caste system" which simply positions cultural critique as a privileged way of excluding students by recasting what they already know (188-89). To counter this tendency, Farmer advocates a de-centered classroom based on Bakhtin's notions of the "superaddressee" and "anacrises" in a way that removes the instructor as the dominant voice in the classroom (188-89). Such a pedagogy, argues Farmer, is consistent with Paulo Freire's *conscientizacao*, "a deepened understanding of the *historical* and situational awareness that enables intervention and transformative praxis" (205).

> This relationship, furthermore, is inherently political. It is in the texts of culture, as broadly conceived here, that the ideological battles of the historical moment are fought. Thus, as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, and others have argued, English teachers are engaged in a cultural

> politics in which the power of students as citizens in the democratic public sphere is at stake. The aim is to make them subjects rather than the objects of historical critique . . . in a critical examination of the economic, social, and political conditions within which the signifying practices of culture take place. (xii)

While an increasingly large number of compositionists would agree, for instance, that the relationship between theory and pedagogy is inherently political, it is by no means apparent that there is agreement with the claim that "English teachers are engaged in a cultural politics in which the power of students as citizens in the democratic public sphere is at stake" and that "the aim is to make them subjects rather than the objects of historical critique, in a critical examination of the economic, social, and political conditions within which the signifying practices of culture take place" (xii). Certainly these are claims that are in circulation in composition and cultural studies, and Berlin and Vivian are well-situated to make a contingent claim that many practitioners, particularly those aligned with liberatory pedagogy, might accept this characterization. This move, from the consensus of their contributors to the much more specific conception of liberatory politics, however, obscures the very contestatory ideas about the kind of political work that cultural studies can and should do in writing instruction. Instead, Berlin and Vivian's argument, along with those of France and Fitts and Giroux, invokes terms like "liberatory pedagogy" and "democratic politics" as the *a priori* and well-accepted "aims" of composition pedagogy.

Importantly, what gets obscured in this characterization are the many institutional and ideological challenges to this political project. For example, how does this

conception of the classroom address the concerns of people like Sharon Crowley for whom what "counts as knowledge" in composition is determined by the academic institution? How does cultural studies help address the differing perspectives about the pragmatics of dissent from within the academic institution? The department? The social formation that helps fund the institution? While I do not want to suggest that Berlin and Vivian must address all of the possible alternatives to their function of the writing class, I am concerned that they do not go far enough in addressing the specific institutional circumstances to which, as they themselves argue, any conception of U.S. cultural studies must attend.

One possible reason for the broad statements of political promise in these arguments is that there has been a tendency in some versions of cultural studies to find resistance everywhere. Thomas S. Frentz and Janice Hooker Rushing, concerned with mining the potential of cultural and rhetorical studies for critical analysis, argue that many in cultural studies oppose all structures as oppressive and overemphasize the text as sites of resistance. In contrast, Frentz and Rushing argue, rhetoric has been too willing to accept dominant structures. To confront these tendencies, rhetoric and cultural studies must view their present antipathies as a "microcosm of cultural fragmentation in general" and insist that while there is nothing inherently wrong with focusing on structures, analyses must serve the "one collective goal of both fields–namely, to build a better way of living" (341-342).

While Frentz and Rushing are primarily concerned with critical analysis, their conception of cultural studies here is instructive for understanding pedagogical arguments in the contemporary institution. The tendency to view cultural studies as resistance

everywhere is particularly important to Frentz and Rushing as it appears to depend upon a simplistic conception of dominant structures which they oppose. In Berlin and Vivian's argument, cultural studies appears to be concerned with avoiding this pitfall as they stress that "writing and reading usually are negotiated acts of discourse . . . . This activity may result in a simple accommodation to hegemonic cultural codes, but it usually involves a negotiated transaction and even resistance" (x). While they are careful to emphasize this process of negotiation, the lack of attention to existing disciplinary structures, in Berlin and Vivian, often tends to reinforce a model of the writing classroom that is consistent with the structure of the hegemonic institution.

In his response to the essays in *Left Margins*, Gerald Graff stresses the limitations of focusing on a single course "at the expense of the *organization* and *interrelation* of courses in the curriculum" ("The Dilemma of Oppositional Pedagogy: A Response" 275). Graff contends that attempts to make the composition classroom an oppositional space create an "oppositional double bind" where instructors must be willing to accommodate views that are conservative or else become themselves totalitarian (276). The options for an instructor, in this case, according to Graff, are limited. Either she can deny access or "equal time" to those who agree with dominant political formations or "dilute" their notions of the classroom as "the free marketplace of ideas" (276). In either case, according to Graff, the "oppositional" classroom falls short of its goals to promote radical politics from within a free and democratic classroom.

Graff's response to this dilemma is to offer a model of classroom pedagogy that addresses its institutional context. In response to many of the essays in *Left Margins*, he rehearses his now well-known model of "teaching the conflicts" pedagogy designed to

introduce students to the "political debate in the university that enables political positions to make sense to them" (282). For Graff, the culture wars provide such a debate and it should be the "task of politically committed teachers . . . to make the debate a central issue for the whole curriculum, trusting students to choose intelligently when the competing arguments are presented to them" (282).

Graff's argument goes far in addressing the limitations of texts like *Left Margins* by focusing attention on the relationship between the politics of academicians and the broader cultural manifestations of such debates. By focusing on the curriculum as opposed to the single class, moreover, Graff's model helps address the specific location in which writing and other forms of instruction take place, and to engage students in political debates that concern the construction of knowledge. However, Graff's model seems to ignore many of the factors in the academic institution in favor of a specific debate. It is not clear, for instance, how Graff's approach would address the institutional function of the writing class as a "mode of surveillance" for dominant discourses.

Certainly, it could be argued under Graff's model that students, having been introduced to explications of the cultural politics of language instruction, would develop a more critical perspective of how these filter into dominant discourses. More to the point, I think, is that Graff's formulation does little to redress the structural imbalances that continue to place writing instruction as a skills-based course that functions to support, rather than complicate, students' sense of social power as mediated through social institutions. In the end, Graff's formulation would seem to focus on the concerns of academics for students who will then fashion essays in support of this or that position.

One of the more heated and well-publicized attempts to put cultural studies theories into practice in the U.S. academy took place at Syracuse University. The so-called "memo-wars," named for the form of some of the more vitriolic exchanges, demonstrate the high stakes and complex questions surrounding the politics of writing instruction and institutional reform that are at the center of cultural studies. In an attempt to rethink English studies in terms of critical theories, Syracuse University developed a new curriculum in English and Textual Studies. For theorists Donald Morton and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, who strenuously oppossed the the move towards textual studies, it really a way of linking post structural theories to traditional curriculum, thereby sacrificing the materialist thrust of cultural studies. "Bourgeois institutions," they argue, "are highly flexible and have immense powers of endurance. They obtain their flexibility and their staying power by constantly absorbing the elements of culture that oppose them; that is, by reducing critiques to various types of reform. In other words, bourgeois institutions, such as universities, always maintain the ideological practices needed to preserve the hegemony of the ruling classes by constantly adapting to it . . . [and] the institution adopts (and thus adapts to its purposes) the discourses of its adversaries" (74).

Zavarzadeh and Morton want to preserve "the notion of the 'outside' to the existing system's 'inside'" through the concept of "disparticipation" necessary to avoid the inevitability of resistant discourses being co-opted in service of the status quo (74). For these theorists "disparticipation" takes the form of their own decision to boycott committee meetings and other markers of professional citizenship, voicing their protest through their absence. While Zavarzadeh and Morton argue for resistance from "outside" as necessary to the radical politics of university curricular formation, they do not extend

their use of this concept to their discussion of cultural studies. It would seem, given their portrayal of the university as a hegemonizing institution, that resistance from "within" is neither possible, nor desirable, as it necessarily amounts to acquiescence to the status quo. Yet their argument for a materialist based cultural studies suggests that they do have in mind a radical curriculum that would function from within the academy. In essence, Zavarzadeh and Morton's essay presents contradictory answers to the question: is a "transformative" cultural studies possible?

In contrast to Zavarzadeh and Morton, Alan Kennedy proposes an explicit "curricular commitment" to cultural studies as part of a wholesale reformation of English department curriculum. For Kennedy, cultural studies constitutes an attempt to develop scholarship and courses that serve both the department and the broader society. Such a program, Kennedy contends, would necessarily involve a rethinking of both literary criticism and composition and rhetoric: "[I]f literature as an iconic object needs to be displaced to make room for cultural studies, then so too does the standard course in composition need to make room for a writing class rooted in rhetorical theory and cultural studies" (27).

Cultural studies, for Kennedy, is useful in helping humanities educators articulate its purpose to those "outside" the field. This means that cultural studies needs to articulate the values it embraces and the skills it can be said to provide its students. Kennedy contrasts this form of institutional cultural studies with the traditional tendency within English studies to ignore questions of values and skills and focuses instead on reading to understand specific texts. By committing itself to the curriculum, Kennedy means that cultural studies enacts change from within at the same time it is able to

articulate clear, persuasive and practical purposes to administrators and to the public at large. Kennedy's approach has the benefit of taking on the practical administrative side of the intellectual question. At the same time Kennedy views his approach as an effective way "to develop a vocabulary that will help us bridge the gap that has been evident on occasion between rhetoric and cultural studies" (40). It is, however, not clear that Kennedy's formulation would avoid the kind of co-optation to which Zavardaeh and Morton allude. Would a well-stated statement of "commitment" be persuasive to administrators who would otherwise be suspicious of cultural studies? Perhaps, but would such a move require cultural studies to forego its critical stance towards the institution? We might also ask if at least some versions of cultural studies are in tension with Kennedy's accomodationist stance towards those resistant to it. These contributions to cultural studies and English suggest the difficulties inherent to any attempt to explore the convergence to two fields as vast and contested as rhetorical studies and cultural studies.

Conclusion

In my attempt to negotiate the concern over sanctifying British cultural studies and the British School, I have referred back to Stuart Hall's definition of cultural studies as an "ongoing act of theoretical clarification" (4). Viewed as such, U.S. cultural studies can look to the British School theories and institutional location as a means for a more particularized, strategic, adaptation to the specific historical conditions of the contemporary U.S. academy. Foucault's conception of power as strategy that is "always already" both resistant and hegemonic, helps break down the inside/outside binary upon

which so many conceptions of cultural studies in the U.S. depend. Moreover, it helps view the disciplinary formation of English studies as a location where power circulates through formal and informal discourses. As such, it becomes incumbent upon scholars to clarify and re-clarify the strategic uses to which they are putting the theoretical assumptions of cultural studies. Cultural studies in this framework can be viewed as the constantly changing site of debates over the political function of English studies and its various fields.

Chapter Two

British Cultural Studies, Counterdisciplinarity and U.S. English Studies

A return to British cultural studies is one way to counter the retreat from the questions of disciplinarity that characterize the work in cultural studies and English in the U.S. This chapter seeks to recover British cultural studies for scholarship and pedagogy in the U.S. I argue that the counterdisciplinary focus can function from "within" the British academy and that the British school provides a useful model and theories for U.S. composition and rhetoric to develop a counterdisciplinary orientation from within the academy. The first major section of this chapter entitled, "Counter disciplinarity and the Institution of British cultural studies," places the focus on disciplinarity at the Birmingham Center with the writings of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson. I read these texts as specific responses to a class-based society as the modern university sustains it. In the second section, "Marxism, British cultural studies and the Question of Disciplinarity," I look at British cultural studies' use of Marxist and postMarxist thought to challenge the disciplinary formation of the modern university. These two sections lead to an exploration in the third section, "Cultural Studies and English Studies in the U.S.," that considers the trajectory of British cultural studies for the U.S. academy. Before developing this argument, however, it will be important to define what I mean by British cultural studies and address the question of orthodoxy as it pertains to the British School.

British Cultural Studies and the Question of Orthodoxy

Work on British cultural studies by Brantlinger and Turner has tended to focus specific attention on its origins, particularly with respect to the work of Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson, and Richard Hoggart. For the purposes of this argument and my emphasis on counterdisicplinarity, it will be important to focus on these theorists. However, the conception of British cultural studies that I use here views the field as a location or "site" through which other theories emerge, many of which are not located in Britain. Instead, I focus here on a strategic narrative of theories and institutions that are characterized by the British school's concern over disciplinarity. Therefore, this narrative not only includes theories in French Structuralism and post structuralism; it also includes theorists like Tony Bennett and Cary Nelson who have sought to maintain this focus. Doing so helps develop the primary contention of this chapter: that the counterdisicplinary focus of British cultural studies helps address the tendency, in U. S. English studies, to ignore the disicplinary politics that circumscribe what counts as knowledge in the field of composition and rhetoric.

In Chapter One, I argued that the concern over developing specific fields as orthodoxy in the U.S. continues to be a primary concern for cultural studies in U.S. English departments. This concern is influenced by the project of British cultural studies which, as Graeme Turner has argued, defines itself, in part, through its "disruption of the boundaries between disciplines, and through its ability to explode the category of 'the natural'–revealing the history behind those social relations we see as the products of a neutral evolutionary process" (6). Interestingly, while the British school emerges with this criticism of traditional orthodoxies, U.S. cultural studies focuses a good deal of

attention on ensuring that the British school itself does not become naturalized as an orthodoxy.

Gayatri Spivak, voiceing concern over the influence of the British school argues that, rather than thinking in terms of a single cultural studies, we think in terms of multiple culture studies. Employing the term culture presumably enables Spivak to address her concern that any formulation of culture studies adapt its theoretical assumptions to the historical and cultural conditions of the specific locations where it is employed (Smithson and Ruff 2-4). Thus, cultural studies in places like India, Australia, and the United States ought to avoid at all costs simply assuming the British school theories as some universal formulation, but as concepts that must address the contingencies of specific historical and geographic locations. [13]

As I have argued in Chapter One, however, this concern over the hegemony of British cultural studies has often been used to avoid questions of disciplinarity altogether. When adapted to the U.S. institution, cultural studies often–because of its antidisciplinary focus–is assumed not to function "within" the academy, or it becomes a cluster of theories that can be selectively and seamlessly incorporated into the disciplinary structure of the U.S. academy. Cary Nelson has been particularly critical of the latter tendency which he contends has tended towards the de-politicization of cultural studies in the

[13] If it is important to consider the way cultural studies "translate" into another context, it is equally crucial, as part of this process, to understand something of the specific historical and institutional conditions shaping the production of these theories. Attempts to formulate an Indian cultural studies that borrows theoretical concepts from the British School, for example, ought first to attend to the historical imbalances of imperialism and the asymmetrical power relations involved in them. Such an endeavor, for example, might address how differences in terms like disciplinarity, orthodoxy and aesthetic (to name a few) might mean in the context of post or neo colonial institutions in Indian and how they might contrast those of the British school. Such attempts have been particularly fruitful in the development of concepts like Hybridity and liminality.

U.S.[14] For Nelson, U.S. cultural studies too often ignores the criticism of disciplinarity and its relationship to broader social politics in order to make it "palatable at once to granting agencies and to conservative colleagues, administrators, and politicians, but only at the cost of blocking cultural studies from having any critical purchase on this nation's social life" ("Always Already" 193). For Nelson, it is particularly important to remember that cultural studies itself was "born in class consciousness and in critique of the academy" ("Always Already" 192). Nelson argues to maintain a focus on the British antecedents to U.S. cultural studies.

These arguments, however, do not necessarily mean that we either hold to some fixed notion of British cultural studies or that we jettison the theories altogether. In fact, this very argument can be traced back to British school theorists who, as Turner suggests, sought from the beginning to guard against a tendency to become a traditional "discipline" itself and stressed the focus on specific institutional and social contexts in the use of any theory. These concerns, therefore, suggest the need to be specific about the institutional frameworks out of which a specific body of theories emerges and into which they are being brought. As Chapter One suggests, the focus on the British school has given way to divergent theories, and we are now at the point where it is equally critical, as Nelson points out, to clarify what we mean when we invoke the term.[15]

Even with these concerns over orthodoxy in mind, there are compelling reasons to strategically recover British cultural studies for U.S. composition and rhetoric. First, the focus on counter disciplinarity makes the British School particularly useful to the

[14] Ultimately, for Nelson, the issue is less a matter of fixing a specific meaning (he argues that the term itself may become obsolete) than it is important to clarify how one uses cultural studies at a historical juncture when its association with the Birmingham project helps maintain its critical position.

specific contingencies of the field of composition and rhetoric in the U.S. Because of its marginalized status within the structure of the academy, some theorists in composition and rhetoric have looked to cultural studies to rethink practices in English. Other theorists have drawn attention to what they perceive as the interdisciplinary focus of composition to link it with the concerns of the British school (S. Miller). In many cases, the focus on questions of disciplinarity has brought the two fields together. However, as I have argued in Chapter One, often the convergence has little impact on the structure of English studies.

Second, recent shifts in English studies in the U.S. begin by invoking, in Berlin and Giroux, the British school and develop a conception of cultural studies as a sort of "umbrella" term to refer to multiple practices. These moves can be regarded as both a useful theoretical reaction against the threat of orthodoxy and, importantly, a rhetorical strategy that enables theorists to avoid the thorny questions of disciplinarity. Finally, I seek to recover a perspective from which to develop critical readings of the field of composition and rhetoric that help move its practices towards a counterdisciplinary U.S. cultural studies from "within" the academy.

Counter-disciplinarity and the Institution of British Cultural Studies

From the time of its inception in the 1960s, the Birmingham Center was concerned with the same question that I have argued contemporary cultural studies in the U. S. faces: what are the political implications of disciplinary assumptions about knowledge? For early British school theorists, the responses to this question focused

[15] The focus on rhetorical theory and pedagogy in the U.S. in Chapters 4 and 5 can be viewed as two responses to the need to develop more specific configurations of the institutions into which British cultural

primarily on class-based social divisions as they were sustained by disciplinary formations of the British academy. As Patrick Brantlinger argues in *Crusoe's Footprints*, the authors of "founding texts" in British cultural studies sought to rethink the concept of culture from that of an object of critical scrutiny to "a category that transcends or transgresses various disciplinary and theoretical boundaries" (37).

Another reason that the early British school lends itself so nicely as a model for U. S. composition studies is that it developed as a specific response to exclusionary tendencies in literary criticism. As Berlin, Crowley, and many other theorists have stressed, the field of composition and rhetoric has historically been defined by its relationship to literary criticism and its assumptions about language. In the early British school, much of this early effort focused on developing alternatives to the Leavisite tradition in literary criticism which, as Richard Hoggart, the Center's first Director, outlines in his inaugural address of 1963, were dominant in England at the time he and other Center members were going through the university system (Schulman 1). Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson were particularly interested in impacting the academic tradition that supports distinctions between "high culture" and "mass culture" (Turner 40). Of particular focus was the influential work of F. R. Leavis, Q. D. Leavis, and Denys Thomson, that assumed that literature as one form of "culture" could function as antidote to the split between a morally superior "high culture" and a "mass culture" characterized by its "abuse of language" and "lack of 'moral seriousness' or of aesthetic value" (Turner 40).

Although the field of literary criticism in the U. S. has changed dramatically over the past twenty years (in part as a response to cultural studies), it is not difficult to see, in

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studies engages.

the contemporary academy, a corrollary between the "split" between the more serious endeavors of literary criticism. Notwithstanding Berlin and Vivian's contention that cultural studies in the U. S. would signal a challenge to the division between the rhetorical and the poetic, the structure of the U. S. academy continues to maintain such divisions. The association of the field of composition and rhetoric with pedagogy, student writing, and expository writing has continued, even in light of contemporary theory, to imply a separation from the more serious work of literary criticism. Therefore, what is needed is an intervention that focuses on the disciplinary structure of the academy (and a host of other institutions) itself.

The project of British cultural studies can be viewed in a similar vein, as an intervention that sought to challenge the privilege afforded to traditional disciplines. This project, moreover, was already underway prior to the establishment of the Center. One of the "founding texts," Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) was published four years prior his appointment as director of the new Center. The extent to which Hoggart's text functioned within the British academy is clear in his strategic use of Leavisite methods against their own conceptions of culture. Specifically, in this text, Hoggart uses Leavisite methods for a sociological analysis that challenges their claim that emerging mass communications threatened to further degrade mass culture through the "misuses of language." In so doing, Hoggart seeks to elevate perceptions of "working class society" as "authentic" and morally stable, in contrast to the Leavisite notion "high culture" as morally superior (Brantlinger 46).

In *Culture and Society* (1958), Raymond Williams similarly seeks to challenge the traditional concepts of culture as the Leavisites assumed them. Like Hoggart,

Williams employs careful textual analysis as a means to "reading" the social. Williams' text was especially significant because of its radical challenge to the universality of the term "culture" itself. Through a type of historical etymology of the term's various uses, Williams argues that what culture "means" shifts in response to significant changes in socio-economic conditions from the industrial revolution to the 1950s. Moreover, Williams' analysis begins to focus directly on the relationship between traditional disciplinary orthodoxys, supported by different cultural spheres, and the maintenance of social power.

Finally, in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1964), E. P. Thompson, directs this concern over class divisions sustained by assumptions about culture to the field of history. Like Hoggart and Williams, Thompson sought to employ traditional methods to reread British cultural politics in a way that challenges the universality of cultural divisions between mass and high cultural. In particular, Thompson's work overturns the traditional and dominant narrative of the British working class as an "automatic and passive" working class culture (Mukerji and Schudson 13) "by advancing a notion of a 'common culture'" (Schulman 4).

There are some obvious differences between the focus on class in the British school and the concerns of contemporary composition and rhetoric in the U. S. Although class continues to be an important issue, it is has not, in the last thirty years, had the kind of influence on scholarship in the U. S. that it has in Britain. Over the years since the early British school texts were published, there has, however, been a good deal of criticism of the emphasis on class-based assumptions we see in Hoggart's assertion of an "authentic" working class culture and Thompson's notion of a "common culture."

Much like contemporary U. S. cultural studies, moreover, these early works often rely on traditional academic formulations, like Leavisite methods of literary analysis. As a result, they tend to maintain some of the problematic assumptions about culture that later theorists would critique. However, these early works are remarkable to the extent that they begin to focus on how specific aesthetic, social, or historical objects, are ultimately underwritten by the traditional disciplines to which they are associated. Thompson's critique of English history, for example, is noteworthy in its presentation of an alternative reading of "mass culture." Its critical force, however, becomes much more pronounced as it suggests that the field of history itself has, itself, been one of the primary means through which the high culture/low culture split has been maintained.

Williams' historical analysis of the concept of culture as, alternately, a specific body of knowledge, a group of individuals, class-based distinctions, and a "structure of feeling" suggests that they are not the timeless referents upon which individuals can be separated into different spheres. The claim that the Center itself, as an anti- or counter-disciplinary institution maintaining a distance from the British academy, however, deserves some clarification. Concerned with the hegemony of the British academy that, like the modern U.S. university, focuses on separate objects of culture (rather than interrelated processes), the British school clearly sought to maintain a critical distance from the academy. Yet emerging as it did in response to the specific social, institutional and material conditions of 1960s England, the British School also maintained a critical position within the academic discourse of the time. In fact, as the project develops, through its critique of Marxism, the questions about critical perspective become more

pressing to the British School, as they demonstrate that there is no "outside" from which to establish a critical perspective.[16]

The focus on Marxism constitutes one of the primary differences between contemporary cultural studies in U. S. composition and rhetoric and the British school. Any attempt to draw on British cultural studies for composition and rhetoric, therefore, benefits from attention to the theoretical developments of Marxism and New Marxism.

British Cultural Studies, Marxism and the Question of Disciplinarity

One interesting and important similarity between British cultural studies in its emergence as a Center and U.S. cultural studies in composition and rhetoric is their mutual focus on praxis. Both are concerned with the practical, social implications of bringing theory into practice–particularly through a form of institutional analysis that looks at the function of the academy in terms of its cultural politics. To gain a better understanding of early cultural studies' relationship to its specific and academic context, and what lessons they may hold for U.S. composition and rhetoric, therefore, it is important to understand that these texts were also attempts to adapt theoretical arguments, in structural and cultural Marxism, to the specific institutions of the British academy. In other words, the "founding texts" are both responses to, and strategic interventions, in two Western institutions: the British academy and Marxist social theory.

It is particularly important to see the British school's contention that culture is "a category that transcends or transgresses various disciplinary and theoretical boundaries" (Turner 37) as a response to the limitations of Orthodoxy or early Marxism. In early

[16] It may also be instructive, for instance, to consider how our understanding of cultural studies might be shaped by attention to the fact that the founders come from working class backgrounds and that Williams

Marxism, culture itself is equivalent to the "superstructure" which Marx and Engels argue is a reflex response to a single determinant, the modes of production or "base." British cultural studies challenges this monodeterministic model. One of the problems which the British School sought to address is that, in this conception of orthodox Marxism, there is "no way out" of the effects of class-based economic systems. Marxism with its focus on class determination was particularly well-suited for Williams, Hoggart and others, who were primarily focused on class inequalities in Britain. The problem was that early Marxism was inconsistent with Williams' developing argument that culture itself was a complex and often contradictory set of practices that was often determined by factors which could not be reduced to class. Of primary concern for all of the founding texts, for example, was the impact of British nationalism in the formation of identities along lines of "mass" and "high" culture. If, as early Marxism suggests, the individual's location within the modes of production ultimately shaped their sense of identity, then how could we explain the emergence of subcultures that were built around an idealized notion of British traditions?

Perhaps a more pressing concern for Williams and the founder of the Birmingham Center was the assumption in most formulations of Marxism: that historic change was ultimately a function of historical processes that were outside the control of individual practices. Historical materialism in the Marxist conception held the problematic assumption that change occurred not through slow developments, but through forms of social revolution that unseated dominant social formations. The reliance on a Marxist teleology that fashioned these changes in terms of historical epochs determined by the control of capital–from feudalism, to capitalism to socialism–moreover, seriously

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and Hoggart taught in adult education programs.

undermined the role of the critical intellectual who sought to explicate social phenomenon as a form of political praxis.

In this formulation, distinctions between different objects of study, like literature and anthropology as well as the intellectual's attempt to demonstrate their function in dominant social politics are subordinated to a focus on a single determinant: control of capital. In the end, they are all ultimately ideological obfuscation or "false consciousness." British cultural studies, however, takes up attempts to rethink this early model that were already being addressed in the Frankfurt school and which would develop through their convergence with structuralism and poststructuralism to better develop an understanding of the role that disciplinary institutions like the academy played in the maintenance of social formations.

Structuralism is particularly important to this move as it provides the necessary link between the analysis of language and the reading of culture. The science of signs developed by Saussure, semiotics, is particularly influential to British cultural studies because it provides the necessary link between language and other meaning-producing systems. Assuming that all meaning is arbitrary (and therefore negotiated) in the relationship between the signifier and the signified, semiotics provides the analytical approach through which Marxists would come to challenge the notion that the separate spheres of knowledge upon which the modern university is based can each be understood as cultural epiphenomenon to the control of capital. Graeme Turner stresses the importance of semiotics for cultural studies' rethinking of early Marxism that "supplies us with a terminology and a conceptual frame that enables the analysis of non-linguistic

signs. For this reason alone, semiotics has become part of the vocabulary of cultural studies" (21).

As Turner suggests, cultural studies' attempt to destabilize the relationship between separate spheres of knowledge is dependent upon understanding the relationship between linguistic analysis and the other systems that were the basis of different disciplines:

> [Saussure] argues that the principles which structure the linguistic systems can also be seen to organize other kinds of communication systems–not only writing, but also non-linguistic systems . . . . The reasons for its attractions [to other disciplines] are pretty clear. Language is a signifying system that can be seen to be closely ordered, structured, and thus can be rigorously examined and ultimately understood; conversely, it is also a means of 'expression' that is not entirely mechanistic in its functions but allows for a range of variant possibilities. Saussure's system thus acknowledges or recognizes the power of determining, controlling structure (analogous to *langue*), as well as the specific, partly 'free', individualized instance (analogous to *parole*). It offers enormous possibilities for the analysis of cultural systems that are not, strictly speaking, language, but that work like languages. (15)

In providing Marxists a framework that links the study of language, literature and rhetoric to other forms of meaning-making, Saussurean semiotics provided the means for focusing on the relationship between language systems as the traditional focus of linguistics and other spheres of knowledge in the modern university. This influence is

seen in the anthropological work of Levi-Strauss; Roland Barthes' "readings" of ritual practices in Western societies in *Mythologies*; Lacan's psychoanalysis based on reading the unconscious as a sign system; and, most influential for British cultural studies, Louis Althusser's structural Marxist analysis of social systems.

Althusserian structuralism exerted a particularly strong influence on British cultural studies' response to orthodox Marxism and its rethinking of the disciplinary formations that were subsumed under the concept of superstructure/culture. Employing structural linguistics, Althusser sought to develop Marxist concepts of "base" and "superstructure" into a discussion of the specific ways that the individual comes to see his/her "lived relations to the real." In so doing, Althusser introduces concepts of Ideological State Apparatuses, interpellation, and overdetermination, and significantly complicates the Marxist understanding of the complex processes through which the superstructure can be said to respond to material conditions.

Althusser's focus on the importance of the ISAs, for instance, significantly focuses the direction of Marxist criticism on the institutions through which social power and individual consciousness are mediated. In contrast to early Marxist formulations that maintained a fairly undifferentiated conception of "superstructure," Althusser focuses on how different institutions–religion, education, and family–participate in the formation of individual subjects. Althusser, in contrast to orthodox Marxism, supplies language for understanding the complex and often contradictory processes through which these apparatuses operate on the individual. Moreover, Althusser's argument for Education as the "most important" of the ISA's directs critical attention to the institutions, the schools and universities, as the mechanisms through which dominant ideas become naturalized.

Thus, the academic intellectual in Althusserian structuralism could explicate the university's function in social politics.

Whereas the Marxist conception of superstructure often remains undifferentiated, in Althusser's formulation it is a site of contestation between the interests of different apparatuses. For example, while the educational system may present concepts like science or history as the foundations from which the individual sees his/her rightful place in a social formation, a religious organization might aver that all such explanations be ultimately subordinated to the will of God and that too great a reliance on science can ultimately lead the subject away from his/her path towards salvation.

In contrast to the monodetermination of orthodox Marxism, Althusser introduces the concept of multiple determinants or overdetermination that stresses the multiple, contradictory ideologies through which the subject comes to see him/her self in relation to material conditions. Moreover, Althusser's use of "interpellation" as the process through which the individual comes to see him/herself as "hailed" by these various apparatuses, significantly complicates orthodox Marxism. The concept of interpellation, borrowed from Lacan, assumes a much more complex process of perception through which the subject comes to see him/herself.

Althusser's work, while significantly developing the orthodox Marxist model in ways that are important for thinking about disciplinary formations, ultimately does maintain many of the problems of it. Even though multiple, contradictory apparatuses overdetermine the individual, for instance, he/she is ultimately subject to ideology as "false consciousness" that reinscribes the notion that individual consciousness is determined by his/her relationship to dominant modes of production. Moreover, in

developing a social model that represents a total system that can be studied empirically, Althusser's model maintains the original Marxist notion that historical change occurs from somewhere "outside" the system. In other words, although the ISA's may function in contradictory ways, in the end, as "state apparatuses," they ultimately support the dominant social formation and its uses of capital. There is, therefore, no room from within the system to effect significant change, since individuals are ultimately overdetermined to accept the naturalized conditions of their existence.

It is this model that Williams draws on and challenges in his focus on cultural processes. In particular, Williams challenges Althusser's reliance on a totalizing social structure that is historically determined. Because there is nothing within the structure to effect social change, nothing but a revolution in consciousness will change a social structure. The fact that ideological apparatuses that serve to create an illusionary sense of reality maintain the existing order, however, makes it difficult to understand how a moment of consciousness might emerge for a revolution.

In contrast, culturalists, according to Turner, "retained a stronger sense of the power of human agency against history and ideology" (29). Williams is concerned with developing an understanding of the historical shifts and fissures that contribute to social change. Williams focuses on critical concepts, or key words, as they change over time in response to multiple determinants.

In contrast to Althusser, for whom change in the structure is ultimately dependent upon some agent outside the structure itself–namely History in the classical Marxist teleology–Williams argues that individual experience and imagination help produce change. Given their emphasis on human agency, culturalists, in contrast, would focus on

those texts and ideas which were local and "parochial" as the ones which provided the most indication of resistance to dominant structures.

Implicit in the structuralist/culturalist debates are different uses of Saussurean linguistics that have important implications for the way British cultural studies develops its critique of all systems through which knowledge is produced. Althusser uses Saussure's *Langue* to read social formations as static totalizing systems. The conventional objects of academic inquiry like society, culture, and literature maintain their separate status, based on the types of systems they reflect. As a result, moreover, Althusser's scientific approach assumes Saussure's synchronic conception of language which isolates the components of a particular system at a specific time. In contrast, Williams' etymological analysis, reflected in foundational British school texts like *Culture and Society*, *Key Words*, and *Marxism and Literature*, argues strongly for the importance of a diachronic model which, in linguistics, looks for changes in language over time (Abrams 102).

The Marxist telos implicit in many formulations of Althusser's theories, however, significantly limits the effect of such efforts.[17] In other words, since all actions are ultimately determined by the control of capital, there is no room in this conception of Althusserian structuralism for the critical intellectual to develop an effective critique of the institution and its function within the dominant formation. Moreover, in this conception of Althusserian Structuralism, the question of disciplinarity becomes subsumed under the force of history. Since all forms of critique are ultimately to be

[17] At this point it is critical to make a distinction between the different types of readings of Althusserian Structuralism. While the structrualist/culturalist debates assume a mechanical deterministic model of social power, this is often based on a reductive reading of Althusser's theories. As Hall's reading of the debates

shaped by forces outside the ISAs, historical evolution, it is reasonable to question the efficacy of any interrogation of existing disciplinary models.

In contrast, the culturalist school that was influenced by early British theorists like Williams focuses the direction of Marxist criticism to the complex historical processes through which individual consciousness is mediated by the institution. Accepting Althusser's conception of the ISA and the critical importance of education as a mechanisms through which dominant ideas become naturalized, Williams assumes that such processes are always being negotiated in a continual process of struggle. Importantly, Williams' focus on the historic shifts in meaning as a means to unsettle naturalized assumptions about what counts as knowledge tends suggests that critical importance of rereading the terms upon which dominant structure is based. This is the assumption that informs Williams' explication of culture itself as a category that functions ideologically to sustain specific social formations. But as Williams argues in *Culture and Society*, such terms are always involved in complex processes of renegotiation.

Historicizing "culture" in this way enables Williams to challenge its use in anthropology, literary analysis and sociology as an object that can be studied empirically as epiphenomenon of specific economic developments. In Williams' more complex conception, culture

> was not a response to the new methods of production, the new Industry, alone. It was concerned, beyond these, with the new kinds of personal and social relationship: again, both as a recognition of practical separation and

later in this chapter suggests, it is possible to read a much more complex conception of social formations in Althusser's theories.

> as an emphasis of alternatives. The idea of culture would be simpler if it had been a response to industrialism alone, but it was also, quite evidently, a response to the new political and social developments, to Democracy. (Introduction xviii)

Culture, for Williams, is not reducible to a specific set of economic circumstances, and therefore cannot be "known" as a function of a single, economic, determinant. Moreover, in Williams' consideration, culture becomes a point of mediation that includes the complex interactions of material, social and personal relationships. It is not difficult to see, in this critique, how Williams' work influences the British school's focus on disciplinary formation. After explicating culture as historically contingent, Williams takes a similar tack to demonstrate denaturalized terms like aesthetics and literature that have become naturalized in the contemporary academy. Althusser expands Marx's early formulation to focus on the ISAs, interpellation, and overdetermination. In British cultural studies, these concepts gain critical purchase as they are incorporated into Williams' insistence upon historicizing the processes through which knowledge is mediated to support and resist existing social formations.

This focus on the institution, particularly as it pertains to the academy, provides a particularly useful line of convergence between British cultural studies and U. S. composition and rhetoric. Recent scholarship in social epistemic rhetorics, in particular, focuses attention on the educational institution (read apparatus) as a primary factor in the construction of identies. Yet the relationship between Althusser's conception of education as an ISA, disciplinary formations, and individual consciousness becomes much more developed through its engagement with structuralism and poststructuralism.

Semiotics, Poststructuralism and the Postdisciplinary Subject

Stuart Hall's attempt to resolve the impasse between classical, structuralist and cultural Marxist notions involves a critique of the notion of determination upon which disciplinary formations are based. Hall is critical of the classical Marxist assumption that there is a "necessary correspondence" between the social structure and individual consciousness. In contrast, Hall draws on post structuralists Paul Hirst and Michel Foucault, who emphasize the indeterminacy of all language systems, to assert a "necessary non-correspondence." This concern over the correspondence, or lack thereof, between social formations and individual consciousness has important implications for the modern university structure which assumes a similar (to classical Marxist) correspondence between the university as one institutional state apparatus and what individuals perceive about their social station. In classical and structural Marxists, this relationship would hold that the social formation, mediated by academic fields like literary criticism, can predictably affect the way individuals see themselves. The basis of this necessary correspondence, however, is found in the relationship between modes of production and superstructural texts.

In unsettling this correspondence, Hall assumes no foundation–whether it be natural, universal or transcendent–that determines the relationship between a particular ideological discourse and the social structure. Instead, Hall argues that meaning is a function of "historical articulation"–a historically specific signification that relates consciousness to social struggle and practice. Incorporating Althusser's notions of interpellation, Hall suggests that consciousness is constitutive of multiple subject positions that depend upon their historical context in which the individual in

interpellated. Ideology, Hall states, involves "historical articulations between forms of consciousness and forms of practice or struggle, it is a complex web of meaning and discourse" ("Signification" 112). Because language is already "inscribed with ideology," what is important is the "form" that a discourse takes in relation to the historically situated struggle for cultural hegemony. Consequently, the relationship between textual practices to the structures of dominance will be different in the different contexts. Hall notes, for example, how his own subject position as a Black man "means" different things, based upon the historical context in which "blackness" is articulated. In England the term will have different meanings–different historical traces–than it does in Jamaica ("Signification" 112-14).

The multiple contradictory subject positions involved in the negotiations over what counts as knowledge, moreover, participate in hegemonic processes which assume a necessarily fluid conception of social processes. Jackson Lears describes these processes in terms of Gramsci's notion of hegemony in which what counts as everyday knowledge or common sense, Lears argues, is not "a static, closed system of ruling-class domination. Rather, it is a society in constant process, where the creation of counterhegemonies remains a live option" (371).

In this framework there are no transcendent objects to which the empirical study of literature, anthropology, or sociology, for example, can by dint of scientific examination necessarily uncover or explicate. Instead, traditional spheres of knowledge are themselves ideological assumptions that must be regarded in the context of broader cultural struggles for power. As Lears suggests, these negotiations are hegemonic in the sense that

> a given group or class, as it develops in the economic sphere, finds some values more congenial than others, more resonant with its own everyday experience. Selectively refashioning the available spontaneous philosophy, a group may develop its own particular world view–an ideology that cements it into what Gramsci called a 'historical bloc' possessing both the cultural and economic solidarity. (372)

In contrast to the traditional formation of the modern university with its emphasis on the essential differences between different spheres of knowledge, Hall's understanding of social formations as historically articulated "blocs" focuses on the *relationships* between particular "world views." In the context of the contemporary academy, this means that rather than maintaining the differences between history and literature, for instance, it is important to locate the "world views" implicit in them as mechanisms of ideological transmission that are constantly shifting in efforts to maintain a specific "historic bloc."

These assumptions demonstrate the fluidity of terms like culture, literature, and society, that were formerly assumed to reference static objects which could be studied empirically. Hall's notion of historical articulation, like Williams' etymological studies, informs the project of British cultural studies over the last thirty years as primarily concerned with unsettling naturalized concepts by demonstrating their investment in power relations.

Thinking of ideology as a "web of discourses" where there are no clear distinctions between cultural spheres, moreover, argues for the importance of studying all textual practices in relation to their specific, local and historical contexts. As Tony

Bennett argues regarding Gramsci's hegemony, "the part played by the most taken-for granted, sedimented cultural aspects of everyday life are crucially implicated in the processes whereby hegemony is fought for, won, lost, resisted" (xvi).

Bennett and Hall's views demonstrate an interesting line of development in the British School from the foundational texts of Hoggart and Thompson. The developments in cultural studies were dependent upon a conception of the "text" as an ideology that was not dependent upon separate and autonomous cultural spheres. Such a shift, moreover, came not coincidentally with the willingness by Hall and others to contest the primacy of the unified and autonomous bourgeois subject. It is important, however, to acknowledge the full impact of the fragmentation of the subject to include the aesthetic, historical and cultural subjects.

The subtext of the historical shifts in cultural studies, therefore, is a radical critique of subjectivity. As Hall and Bennett demonstrate, once the veil has been lifted from this subject, the constructedness of literature (and all forms of culture) is revealed and there is little argument left for an aesthetics removed from the everyday. Consequently, the entire concept of "literature" is being rethought in ways that parallel a shift in conceptions of culture and ideology. When cultural spheres are denaturalized, they become part of the "web of discourses," the meanings of which are indeterminate except as "historical articulations." This does not mean, however, that certain forms of art cease to please or that all are the same. It simply argues that the distinctions between cultural artifacts are invested in ideological struggles that are constitutive of the struggle for cultural hegemony.

Cultural Studies and English Studies in the U.S.

In one sense, therefore, it seems that British cultural studies would be an easy match for U.S. composition and rhetoric. In much the same way that the British school emerges through criticism of the Leavisite, contemporary composition and rhetoric have been influenced by the challenges to American New Criticism. Moreover, the focus in British cultural studies on the interelationship between the academic institution, disciplinary formations and language would appear to make it particularly useful for the U.S.

In U.S. English studies the borders between the field of rhetoric and composition and literary criticism were sustained by the New Critical movement that arose during and after World War II. Headed by Cleanth Brooks, John Crow Ransom, and influenced by the writings of T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards, this movement was particularly concerned with insulating the text from the effects all contexts. New Criticism, like the Leavisite tradition, therefore, offered an interesting mixture of cultural elitism and scientism. The critic was to be concerned with establishing literary value based upon the text itself. New Criticism emphasized that which made the "poem a poem and not some other thing." Removing the text from its historical and cultural context argued for its universality based on the criteria of complexity and cohesion. The specific attributes that constituted this type of text, moreover, were ambiguity, paradox and irony. The effect of New Criticism on literary analysis in America was to argue for literary value by reading a text for these attributes. From the 1930s on, there was a proliferation of readings of canonized texts that sought to establish their value by locating these attributes in them. Importantly, American New Criticism disavows historical and contextual analysis with the rhetorical

gesture, articulated by Wismatt and Beardsley in 1946 as the "intentional fallacy." This "fallacy" is the "error of interpreting and evaluating a literary work by reference to evidence, outside the text itself" (Abrams 90).

The nationalist impulses of New Criticism were clearly at odds with the developments in structuralism and post structuralism. For one thing, New Criticism was American and had a particular tradition of scholars who were ensconced in literary institutions. In addition, the "close reading" of specific texts was a particularly manageable form of intellectual activity for both the post war American student and professor. This was an important consideration, given the large numbers of G.I.s who flooded the campuses after World War II. Perhaps the primary concern in American literary circles was the apparent affinities between structuralism and Marxist conceptions of social dominance.

As Chapter One has suggested, however, this engagement has been limited by the elimination of the question of disciplinarity in English studies. This elimination, ironically, has been reinforced by the interest in composition and rhetoric in establishing academic legitimacy as a discipline. As a way to better understand the limitations of this disciplinary concern in composition and rhetoric, therefore, the next chapter focuses on debates over the uses of literature in the writing class, to dramatize how counterdisciplinary cultural studies might help intervene.

Chapter Three

Framing the Question, Questioning the Frame: Cultural Studies, Disciplinarity and the Debates over Appropriateness of Literature in Composition and Rhetoric

At the beginning of each class that I teach in literature, composition or interdisciplinary courses, I ask students to discuss what they like to read. I have done this for several years now, and I can't really recall why I started to do it, except perhaps as some kind of logical icebreaker to a course that involves reading and writing. Depending on how I have framed the question, I have received vastly different responses. If I simply ask students to introduce themselves and say what they like to read, they will often offer up a series of familiar names like Morrison, Dickens, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Walker, and so on. Mixed into the listing, some students will offer up interests in popular novels (Clancy, Grisham, King) and magazines (*Cosmopolitan*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *M*).

When, however, I begin the course by discussing my penchant for reading true crime books, or how I like to go to blockbuster movies (I avoid the term "films"), I have perhaps not surprisingly tended to get different responses. In these cases students tend to answer as if I had asked what they like to read in terms of what they (and not the academy) privilege. Consequently, students provide a lot fewer references to Julius Caesar and Hamlet, and a good deal more Danielle Steele and John Grisham. Therefore, when I preface the discussion by presenting my own interest in a genre that is coded non-literary in the traditional conception of the term "literary," students are much more likely to present a much wider variety of popular texts.

This exercise is a constant reminder to me that students in my English classes have their own ideas about "high" and "low" cultural texts and that the way we frame questions about what counts as knowledge has an important impact on how students situate themselves in relation to different types of texts.[18] When I did not preface my question with information about what I liked, students tended to answer as if I'd asked, what do you like that you think the academy values? However, my admission regarding my own interests in reading other types of fiction and non-fiction seemed to give some level of validity to what students already like to read. Ultimately this preliminary activity lead to a discussion about different assumptions about texts, how they are coded, what the academy privileges, and how individuals view their relationship to these texts. Because of these classroom encounters, I have come to the conclusion that not only can "literature" be used in composition studies, it should be used. [19]

In this chapter I will explore the recent controversial debates regarding the "appropriateness of literature in composition," (the so-called "Tate-Lindemann debates") to demonstrate how cultural studies can intervene in discourses about curriculum and pedagogy.[20] First, I will contend that these debates are indicative of the limitations of the "disciplinary drive" in composition and rhetoric.[21] Second, I will employ cultural studies

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[18] Although I am focusing here on the writing class, the concerns over how the class is framed are always present in any classroom.

[19] Literature as I am using the term here refers to both imaginative fiction and an institution with a problematic history. This definition is contrasted to the humanist conception of literature in the debates I analyze in this chapter.

[20] This notion of cultural studies draws on British cultural studies and the emphasis on counter disciplinarity that is developed in Chapter Two.

[21] I do not mean to assert that the concern over disciplinarity that we see in the work of Sharon Crowley, Erika Lindemann and many others is somehow incorrect or misguided. In fact, I readily acknowledge that the hard-fought battles over composition's disciplinary standing have cleared a space for the kinds of arguments I am making here. However, in analyzing these specific debates over "literature in composition," I am calling into question--by looking at one of the "blind spots" caused by this drive for disciplinarity--the merits of maintaining this disciplinary drive today. In other words, I am assuming that

theories to reconsider how literature can and, I argue, ought to be used in the writing classroom.

Doing so, I assume, requires that compositionists extend the conversation beyond the troubled historical relationship with literary criticism that is documented in the works of Berlin, Crowley, Scholes, France and many others. While composition emerged as an academic discipline separate from literary criticism, the division between the two intellectual and institutional areas has become so pronounced that it often obscures some of the promising points of intersection between them. One way to begin to disrupt these disciplinary tendencies, I believe, is through an analysis of the problematic ways literature and critical theory are characterized in such debates. Of particular relevance to this dissertation is the lack of attention, in these debates, to the influence of counterdisciplinary notions of cultural studies in rethinking practices in composition and rhetoric. This elision is partially a function of the way the debates are framed in the first place.

Framing the Question

These so-called "Tate-Lindemann debates" over the "appropriateness of literature in composition," began in the March 1993 issue of *College English*. They began with Gary Tate and Erika Lindemann, two well-known figures in composition and rhetoric, presenting antithetical responses to the question, is literature appropriate to composition? Lindemann argues that literature is an unnecessary distraction in courses designed to help students in academic and professional discourse. Literature, she argues, is inconsistent

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we are at a strategic point where composition and rhetoric may be better-suited to a counterdisciplinary perspective.

with a course that "offers guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions" (312). Gary Tate, in contrast, cautions against Lindemann's use of "academic discourse" as the objective of the writing course. He argues that literature serves composition because it helps students "enter and participate in conversations *outside the academy*, as they struggle to figure out how to live their lives . . . how to vote and love and survive, how to respond to change and diversity and death and oppression and freedom" (320).

Tate and Lindemann, who later expressed surprise that their discussion would elicit the kinds of controversy it has, seem to have tapped into a concern that is on the mind of many in composition. In addition to the four comments that accompanied this issue of *College English*, the discussion has been taken up in a series of articles, a book and, doubtless, in many discussions on college campuses around the country. But why so much attention to a question that many in composition, like Erwin Steinberg, believe has been settled a long time ago? What is really at stake in debates over whether composition teachers use literature, classical rhetoric or some other form of text? Sharon Crowley argues that the answer to this question is institutional legitimacy. Debates over literature in composition, she suggests, have less to do with the potential or limitations of imaginative fiction for writing classes "than they are a cover or code for a much larger institutional issue: the status relation between composition and literature within English departments" (21).

Crowley's position seems warranted if we accept, as she does, Steinberg's contention that "literature has not had a secure place in composition since at least the 1930s" (2). If, she argues, this is the case, then we can learn a good deal from these

debates about how composition views its practices, its institutional relationship to literary criticism and even the status of the freshmen writing class. Crowley makes the case persuasively in *Composition in the University*, a text at least as controversial as the Tate-Lindemann debates in its call for the elimination of the required writing course.

What if, however, we are not so willing to accept the premise that literature has been effectively jettisoned from composition? What if the debates over literature are, at least in part, really about literature and its effectiveness or lack of effectiveness for freshmen composition? At the very least, this perspective calls for a counter-reading of debates themselves to seek out some understanding of why so many people seem to agree that literature has been effectively eliminated. Moreover, it would, it seems to me, require more attention (than is provided in the debates) to what we mean by terms like literature and literary theory.

This is the perspective I have taken in my reading of the debates, in part because I have found myself wondering at the numbers, proffered by Tate, Steinberg and others, that suggest that, since at least the 1960s, only about one in five composition courses has even used literature. My experiences teaching a number of writing courses (if only on two campuses) suggests that this is not the case. Moreover, a brief glance at the dozen or so rhetorics on my bookshelves published in the last decade suggests that literature continues to be included in books that are used in composition. At the same time, however, I have to acknowledge, along with Steinberg, Crowley and others, that I do not see much discussion of literature at the CCCCs conference. In fact, I can recall feeling somewhat embarrassed as a presenter at the Michigan College English Association

conference some years back that mine was the only paper that included a critical reading of a literary text.

This discrepancy between what I've seen in conferences and journals and what I have experienced as a graduate student in English studies, I will argue, does ultimately suggest that the literature question has more to do with what is taught than it has to do with the "status relations." In contrast to Crowley and others who assume that when compositionists talk about literature they refer to the tradition of literary humanism, however, I am more concerned with what these debates tell us about what can be said in composition and rhetoric. My purpose in so doing, however, has less to do with supporting my own use of literature in writing than it is informed by my interest in the potential and limitations of cultural studies in composition.

My use of literature, which is based on British cultural studies, is based on the assumption that terms like literature, rhetoric, humanism and a host of related concepts circulate in our society in ways that have important implications for power relations. In this sense, composition and rhetoric, while disassociated from literary humanism, is intimately concerned with the institution of English studies, which continues to present complex and contradictory notions of terms like poetics and rhetoric. Moreover, I accept the assumption of early British School theorists like Hoggart, Williams, and Thompson, that the absence of critical dialogue on questions of aesthetics and the like tends towards naturalizing them. Ultimately, then, my focus on the Tate-Lindemann debates, and the attention I give to Crowley's argument in this and the following chapter, are directed at better understanding the specific institutional context in which cultural studies engages composition and literature.

These debates over literature in composition actually preclude discussions of cultural studies and the literary as social text. One of the problems is that historical narratives that position composition in diametrical opposition to literary humanism frame these debates. Specifically, I will argue that these debates reveal a tendency to frame the concerns and practices in composition as antithetical to those of literature. I will conclude, finally, that what is needed is a conception of the literary in composition studies as an institutional set of practices with historically indicated conventions and social effects.

Composing Histories of the Literary

The early contributions to the Tate-Lindemann debates were followed by a series of responses from scholars who used them as a forum for advocating a specific role of composition, based on its historical, institutional relationship with literary criticism. Most participants in the debate focused particular attention on the period following the 1950s as the point when literature started to be replaced by classical rhetoric. Simultaneous to this moment was the emergence of the CCCCs, and the proliferation of student populations on college campuses all over the country. Thus, the removal of literature, according to these scholars, was intimately connected to the emergence of composition as a separate academic discipline separate, in fundamental ways, from the study of literature.

Not only do the debates over literature in composition reflect this narrative, they also suggest specific reasons for the perceived shift away from literature in the post-war era. Tate, for instance, offers the most controversial insight with his assertion attributing

the elimination of literature to over-enthusiastic "Rhetoric Police" who were responding to poor teaching practices in 1960s and 70s (318). Gregory Jay offers a similar if less controversial assessment that the 1960s saw the elimination of literature in large part because of the "disciplinary drive" within composition (675). And Steinberg adds that the removal of literature was influenced by post-war demographics where academics had to contend with a large infusion of underprepared students. Sharon Crowley sums these positions up nicely in her assessment that literature was removed from composition because of a combination of demographic, theoretical and institutional factors.

In reading these narratives, I was struck by what I would characterize as a problematic similarity despite the differences. Although they attribute the change to different factors and certainly advance different positions about what it should mean for composition today, the scholars in this debate each tends to accept that literature was removed somewhere around the middle of the century. Based on a closer reading of these debates, however, I have come to view these similarities as the effect of problematic assumptions about what constitutes literature, how practices in composition change, and the limitations of a grand historical narrative in composition studies.

Problems with Debates

As I have suggested, these debates too often assume a uniform, static conception of literature that does little to advance our understanding of how it has continued to impact composition studies in formal and informal ways. One reason for this limited perspective is that the debates are, from the outset, framed in terms of an oppositional discourse between Lindemann's and Tate's positions. In asserting his argument

specifically for literary humanism, Tate may have helped set the parameters of the discussion. In any case, it is difficult to assess, in Lindemann's response, exactly what she means when she invokes "imaginative literature."

Steinberg, however, presents a much more developed sense of what he means. Through his attacks on Richard Lanham it becomes clear that when he refers to literature he is referring to a humanist conception of it. For example, Steinberg takes Lanham to task for viewing what he characterizes as Lanham's "elitist" tendency to privilege the humanist (literary) over the practical (rhetorical) (275). Moreover, the literary in Steinberg's construction is defined in opposition to the practical concerns of students, to the point where the literary becomes a matter of "class" and "style" in marked opposition to the "craft of prose" (267). Steinberg's categorical dismissal of the use of literature in composition, then, appears to be based on his feeling that literary humanism lurks behind those who argue for literature in composition. Steinberg's analysis of literature in composition depends exclusively on historical documents about the use or lack of use in composition and on the arguments of humanist compositionists. What is missing in this criticism, of course, is any engagement with the various theories about imaginative fiction.

As I have suggested above, both Steinberg's and Lindemann's focus on literary humanism can be explained, in part, by the way the argument is framed in the first place. Lindemann's article is, after all, presented as a dialogue with Tate who self-consciously identifies himself as a humanist. Placing two notable figures like Tate and Lindemann in diametrical opposition, however, seems to limit the possibility for alternative readings that might include postmodern notions of the literary.

The limitations of this problematic conception of the literary are particularly acute in one of the few references to critical theory in Lindemann's argument. Lindemann acknowledges the impact of new theories on composition when she states, "Some people believe that recent work in critical theory offers new reasons to teach literature in freshman English classes" (314). While critical theory may, for Lindemann, change our orientation towards specific texts, it apparently has no impact on what we consider literature to be. "Critical theory," she contends, "has value only insofar as it gives our students a more self-conscious awareness of their behavior as readers, engaged in significant acts of language in every class they take, not just the literature class" (314). In maintaining this separation between critical theory and what is meant by literature, Lindemann ultimately maintains a division between the types of rhetorical texts she wants her students to read and academic and professional discourses.

Although she offers a much more developed historical accounting of the uses of literature in composition, Sharon Crowley offers an equally static representation of the literary. In her argument, Crowley places the participants in these debates in two, mutually exclusive camps, based on their relationship to literary humanism. On one hand, she associates Lindemann and those concerned with academic discourse as pragmatists who disavow humanism. In contrast, she views those who support literature's use, like Tate, Latosi-Sawin, and Crain, with literary humanism. The latter group, moreover, hold on to humanism because of their aversion to "anti-humanist literary theory" (24). Notably absent in Crowley's summation of these debates are those who use theory, literary or otherwise, as a means for using literature in the writing classroom.

Historical Grand Narratives

I find it interesting that, despite their disparities, these arguments–with the exception of Tate's second essay–each begins by accepting the "fact" that literature has been, to a greater or lesser degree, eliminated from the field of composition studies since around the 1960s and 1970s. Even when the question of the historical validity of specific claims comes into question, as they do in Steinberg and Crowley, for instance, these arguments assume an extremely uniform narrative about what actually happened.

These debates are characteristic of what I perceive as a tendency in composition studies to remove discussions of literature, and by extension literary theory, from the official discourses of the field of composition and rhetoric. In fact, these debates demonstrate that not only has literature continued to be taught to larger degrees than are reported in official discourses, but also that the conceptions of the "literary" and "literary theory" remain critical to understanding pedagogy and scholarship in composition and rhetoric.

One reason that the "fact" of literature's elimination has been so easy to accept is that it is fueled by the dominant narrative of composition studies which has been passed down by the influential work of James Berlin and others.[22] This narrative as it is clearly outlined by Crowley approximates what I take to be received wisdom in the field of composition. Crowley, drawing on Berlin, contends that up until the 1950s and 60s, humanism served as the "common thread " that linked literary criticism and composition in dialectical opposition to one another (21). In composition this influence is felt in the tendency to privilege clear expository prose that most precisely expresses the student's

[22] cf. Sharon Crowley's *Composition and the University* and Alan France's *Composition as Cultural Practice*.

mastery of a given subject. These assumptions, as Alan France argues, support movements like expressivism as the means for accessing a "self" through writing, and cognitivism which develops research practices based on empirical observation of the writing process. Humanism, according to this narrative, also serves as the foundation for literary New Criticism in the post-war United States. In contrast to composition's focus on the practical and pedagogical implications of writing instruction, New Criticism privileges the reading of imaginative fiction through hermeneutic processes designed to decode opaque or figurative uses of language to posit a best reading or interpretation. As many commentators have suggested, these dual uses of humanism support hierarchical distinctions that elevated literary criticism and marginalized composition. Whereas literary criticism under humanism focused on the sanctified function of poetics to access universal truths of great writers, composition remained moored in the rhetorical, practical concerns of student writers. [23]

In the decades following the 1960s, this dominant narrative suggests, composition has had new possibilities to forge its own disciplinary status separate from literary criticism. This shift, moreover, is the result of a number of factors that further severed the links between literature and composition: post war demographics, new theories, and the development of composition as a separate discipline. As the Tate-Lindemann debates suggest, moreover, this period also saw a reduction in the uses of literature in composition and a focus on classical and new rhetorics as the obvious sources for composition studies. While this dominant narrative has served to support the hard-fought disciplinary status of composition studies, it also represses some of the complexities and

[23] It is important to note, however, that even while humanist assumptions about the subject formed the foundation for these different schools of thought, these schools had very different conceptions of the

contradictions that shape practices in English studies. A closer analysis of the Tate-Lindemann debates illustrates some of the assumptions that, I argue, contain composition theory in ways that are important for understanding the possibilities and limitations of anti-disciplinary theories like cultural studies.

In Crowley's prefatory comments to *Composition in the University*, she suggests, that her criticism of contemporary practices in composition comes at "an inauspicious moment, because as luck would have it, this is an auspicious professional moment for those who teach composition in the university" (ix). Crowley's argument from the outset appears to be based on the idea that composition has now arrived at a critical place within the academy, where "We now have an opportunity to decide whether our art and our discipline will remain in thrall to attitudes about and uses of composition that descend from an older, very different kind of university" (ix). Crowley is not specific about why the present is the time to remove the writing class, although it is clear from her Preface that composition has achieved some degree of agency to decide for itself how it views its relationship to the past. What this past means and how composition might break free of it are the subject of her text, one that depends in large part upon a developed master narrative that places composition at this place.

Paradigm Shifts

One of the problems in the Tate-Lindemann debates is a tendency to describe the changes surrounding the 1960s and 70s in terms of Kuhnian paradigm shifts. It is not difficult to see, given the dramatic social changes surrounding this period, why scholars would think of it in terms of seminal movements. However, the concept of a paradigm

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relationship between reality and language.

shift can also obscure the very complex processes involved in institutional and cultural changes. This is, I think, the problem with Tate's first essay as he explains that literature was eliminated, in part, because of poor pedagogical practices. "However," Tate continues, "a teaching approach will not disappear merely because it is misguided or downright wrong. It will disappear only when there is something else to replace it . . . . A paradigm will not just disappear. It will vanish--whatever paradigms do–only when it is replaced by another paradigm" (317). For Tate, as I have mentioned, classical rhetoric under the purview of the CCCCs ultimately replaces literature.

Lindemann uses remarkably similar language to dismiss the use of literature in composition today. "It is as if," Lindemann argues,

> we have already played out our enthusiasm for writing as process and rejected those opportunities offered by the Writing Across the Curriculum movement to learn more about discourse in other disciplines and as we look about us, waiting for the paradigm to shift, we rediscover literature. For some, the discovery represents a welcome resurgence of interest in reading-as-process; for others, an antidote to writing courses that lack 'content.' (310-311)

In my reading of these arguments, both Tate and Lindemann invoke the paradigm shift in ways that reduce the complex processes of historical change in the academy. For Tate, it seems that the "shift" is made at least in part as a reaction to poor teaching practices. Lindemann uses the idea of a paradigm shift to satirize those who argue for literature as a rather capricious response to a need to find something new after we've "played out our enthusiasm" (310). In both Tate and Lindemann, although in different

ways, the paradigm shift is used to obscure, rather than to clarify, the changes in composition, particularly as they surround the implications of the 1960s and 70s. And while I do not wish to contend that such shifts do not happen over time, Tate and Lindemann's early arguments provide little in the way of understanding the complex interplay of theory and institutional contexts. Tate's reliance on a combination of poor teaching and a consequent paradigm shift is predicated on his earlier contention that "literature's virtual disappearance. . .was not. . the result of all those theoretical reasons in some recent articles on the topic" (315).

Rethinking the Historical in Composition

Pondering the reactions to his and Erika Lindemann's initial pieces in *College English*, Gary Tate sought to rethink the historical basis upon which he made his claims that literature had been effectively eliminated from composition. He is particularly interested in the "crucial years" of the 1950s and 1960s, "as classical rhetoric was being recovered and introduced into the composition classroom" ("Notes" 305). To address the limitations of "grand narratives," Tate looks to published reports of CCCCs workshops from the 1950s to 1974. These sources, he contends, suggest an often-intense level of insecurity among compositionists using literature. He concludes, from his reading of these sources, that rather than being eliminated from Freshmen English, literature continues to be "at least, from 1950 on, a matter of heated debate" (307). Tate's re-reading seems to suggest a much different picture of the uses of literature in composition than that which was advanced in the earlier debates. Not only was literature "contested

from the first CCCC onward," but also its use was advocated by important figures in the study of rhetoric like Wayne Booth (307).

Tate's revision is suggestive of an important tension that is characteristic of the use of literature in composition. While he draws on Kitzhaber's study and his correspondence with Richard Larson, which both suggest that one in five composition courses employs literature, Tate revises his position: "My belief that literature has been driven out of the writing class was a result of what had happened to me in the 1960s. . . . I obviously generalized my experience into a national trend" (304). For me, Tate's revision signals one of the most compelling contributions to the debates over literature in composition. I am less interested in the technical accuracy of his figures than I am his assessment of the nature of the debates.

Tate's conclusion points to a characteristic of English studies that is particularly important to my consideration of new theories like cultural studies. In both his earlier reference to the "Rhetoric police" and in his historical revision of the question of literature in composition, Tate points to a divide between the official discourse and unofficial discourses in composition studies, stating that

> It would be more accurate to say that although literature certainly did not disappear from the classrooms of many composition teachers, it did disappear from the conversation of our discipline. In other words, although we might still be using literature, we weren't talking about it. (305)

While I would not go so far as to reference the "rhetoric police" and their association with the CCCCs, it seems plausible that the submersion of the literature

question has been in part an effect of the disciplinary drive in composition studies. One unfortunate effect of this submersion, moreover, has been a lack of a meaningful dialogue on the various points of intersection between composition and literary studies. In fact, the lack of a sustained encounter between composition and literary theory is indicated in the Tate-Lindemann debates. It is noteworthy, for instance, that not only did the use of literature in composition become removed from the unofficial discourse in the field, but when it does emerge, it is too often framed in the terms of 1950s.

Tate's argument compels me to reframe the question with which the Tate-Lindemann debates began. As I have argued, much of the debate is framed through a historical narrative that says literature has long since been effectively eliminated from the class. Crowley, Steinberg and others use this "fact" as the basis for casting the call for using literature in composition as an attempt to reclaim humanism as the model of literature that was active when compositionists quite teaching literature. If, however, we assume as I do that imaginative fiction continues to play an important role in composition studies it seems to me that we ought to attend to how it is being taught in the composition classroom and why official discussions of its uses are often marginalized.

Unofficial Discourses: Rethinking the Literary in Composition

Before approaching these questions, however, I would like to make a stronger case for the "fact" that literature continues to play an important role in composition studies, which points to the interesting division between official and unofficial discourses. This notion of unofficial discourses draws on Foucault's assessment of how power operates. According to Foucault, every statement is also a decision to ignore or

obscure other speech acts. If we view composition studies in terms of a gap between the official and the unofficial, then we can usefully ask what gets elided in the tendency to remove literature from composition. One answer to this question, as I have argued, is the status of composition and rhetoric as a separate discipline. In other words, attending to the various uses of literature in composition first suggests a point of intersection that, given the institutional history of marginalization, compositionists are reasonably cautious of. But as I have also tried to argue, removing literature from composition also precludes the possibilities to be found in postmodern conceptions of the literary.

Such an engagement is inconsistent with Tate's assertion, based on his reading of CCCCs workshops, that from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, "the proponents of literature seemed unable to find a language that would enable them to do more than make unsupported declarations about the great value of literary study for composition students" (309). Yet there is a certain logical problem at work in Tate's argument. If, as he has argued, literature had been effectively obscured from the official conversation in composition and rhetoric (read Rhetoric Police), then it is also likely that those conversations about literature that do make their way into CCCCs workshops were mediated by the same disciplinary biases. Thus, when Tate claims that "the conversation about literature in freshmen composition was dying [and] that no new insights were present to invigorate the discussion," we might well consider the academic culture that limited invigorating new insights.

It is noteworthy that similar criticisms can and have been made about the Tate-Lindemann debates. In fact, Steinberg, argues precisely the point that, with the exception of Tate's reference to the "Rhetoric Police," there is nothing new in debates over

literature in composition. It is difficult, however, to imagine that such new insights and invigorating discussions are not part of the informal or unofficial discourses surrounding the question of literature in composition.

My suspicion, however, is that there is a good deal more literature being taught in composition classes, than these "official" sources indicate. In each of the writing courses that I've taught where there has been a required rhetoric, it has contained texts that would fall into the category of canonical literature. Moreover, most of my colleagues teaching freshmen composition come from literary studies and continue to employ canonical literature as sources for study. Although I acknowlege that there are places where literature of this sort is not taught, I believe that the question of literature's appropriateness and use remains limited by a failure to acknowlege the less official testaments to its use.

What is more important than whether literature is being taught, however, is meant by literature and how it is being taught. As long as the conversation is framed to exclude non-humanist theories like cultural studies, I doubt that the debates will move forward to any significant degree. Yet when we consider the various ways that we can think of literature--as institution, rhetoric, social text--it becomes clear that there are excellent reasons for using it in the writing class.

Cultural Studies and the Uses of Literature

Tony Bennett, an Austrailian cultural studies theorist who I locate firmly in the tradition of British cultural studies provides a particularly useful way to think about literature. Bennett's argument can be understood as a response to Terry Eagleton's

argument that literature no longer provides a useful term. Eagleton contends that because the literary is no longer supported by scientific claims as a distinct form or writing or as an illusion based on ideology it is no longer a useful concept (qtd. in Bennett, 139).

Tony Bennett responds that while literature "cannot designate an ontologically distinct realm of writing. . . this [fact] need not huinder its capacity to designate distinctions of another kind" (141). For Bennett literature can be used to "refer to a particular socially organized space or representation whose specificity consists in the institutionally and discursively regulated forms of use and depolyment to which selected text are are put" (141).

This conception of literature as an institution provides an alternative to the humanist-antihumanist dichotomy implicit in the Tate-Lindemann debates. Literature in Bennett's formuation as a "historically specific set of institutional and discursive arrangements" can be used pedagogically because it has been put on a par with other types of institutional practices that "interact with other spheres of social practices" (141).

Fashioning the literary in this way, I will argue in chapter four, benefits from a cultural rhetorical approach that looks to the mechanisms that produce and maintain the idea that literature is a separate sphere. Bennett's focus on the specificity of literature found in its historically indicated "real" social practices that are both institutional and discursive, moreover, draws our attention to the relationship between the institutional and the discursive as both are seen to have rhetorical effects.

In moving away from a humanist conception of literature and literary theory, Bennett moves towards questions surrounding the uses to which literature is put and the occassions in which those uses are met. My interest in *Alias Grace* as a certain type of

historical fiction, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter on cultural rhetorics, develops in part from the fact that it is one of the genres that foregrounds this tension.

Chapter Four

Cultural Rhetorics in Practice:

Reading and Writing Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*

The question of how to make cultural studies and rhetorical theory "work" for the field of composition and rhetoric remains perplexing. While it may be useful to read scholarship in composition and rhetoric as indicative of a disciplinary drive, it is more difficult to offer alternatives to existing practices. Certainly we can still see a contradiction in existing research in composition and rhetoric that continues to support a "skills"-based approach to reading and writing on the one hand, and that tries to incorporate cultural theories and a "critical" approach to learning on the other hand.

While there has been some recent attention to how the intersections of cultural studies and rhetoric might help address this contradiction, this work has tended too often to ignore the institutional politics that circumscribe what counts as knowledge in the field of composition and rhetoric. What reading and writing practices are best suited to the "postmodern condition," where traditional forms of writing constitute only a portion of the texts and images students negotiate on a daily basis? What are the forms through which knowledge has been organized and disseminated? And how might we "read" the hierarchical distinctions implicit in them?

Throughout this dissertation, I have employed disciplinarity as the operating metaphor from which to read academic texts as themselves rhetorical forms. In shifting the focus to specific reading and pedagogical strategies, I continue to stress the

disciplinary contexts in which texts are produced and consumed.[24] However, in so doing I must extend the conception of disciplines beyond that which we typically associate with the academic fields.

Reading Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* as a specific type of cultural rhetoric, this chapter builds on existing scholarship in cultural studies and rhetoric to develop practices that view all texts as culturally situated forms of production. Specifically, I will employ critical concepts in cultural studies to focus on the rhetorical questions of the modes and forms of production in Atwood's novel. As will become clear in my reading of *Alias Grace*, a novel which takes place in the nineteenth century, this broader conception of disciplinarity enables us to read emergent fields of psychology next to less "academic," but no less important, spheres of knowledge such as parapsychology and metaphysics. In so doing, I will argue, the novel, like British cultural studies and rhetoric, dramatizes the disciplinary and disciplining assumptions about knowledge implicit in the generic forms and technologies surrounding writing.

This chapter first attends to existing scholarship on cultural and social-epistemic rhetorics as a means through which to develop an alternative conception of cultural rhetorics–one which focuses on this notion of disciplinarity. Arguing that the theoretical assumptions for cultural rhetorics are already apparent in the fields of rhetoric and cultural studies, I then put these theories to work in a reading of *Alias Grace*. This chapter concludes with a discussion of implications of cultural rhetorics for the writing class.

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[24] Disciplinary formations here refer to academic and non-academic institutional sites through which texts are produced to discipline the individual through the organization of different types of knowledge.

Already Cultural Rhetorics?: British cultural studies and Epistemic Rhetorics

One of the strengths of cultural studies has been that it allows the critic to employ a variety of theories and assumptions that are best suited to his/her specific focus. As Douglas Kellner argues in his analysis of *Rambo* films in *Media Culture*, this multi perspective approach allows the critic to incorporate a variety of critical perspectives. Kellner suggests that for a " fuller picture of cultural text[s] and social phenomena, one must therefore grasp a wide range of constituent elements of cultural texts and practices....To do this properly, one needs to draw on a spectrum of critical methods" (97). This approach avoids the pitfalls of more centered approaches, remaining "open, critical and flexible, refusing to fix any orthodoxy, or to close off any field in any premature way" (Kellner 55).

In my reading of *Alias Grace* as a cultural rhetoric I have found it useful to draw on this multi-perspective approach. Specifically, I employ the British school's arguments about determination; Tony Bennett's arguments about historical fiction and genres; and a reading of the novel itself as multi-perspective critique. These emphases, moreover, are directed at understanding the specific ways that the novel achieves its rhetorical effects through a focus on the forms through which knowledges are organized and disseminated. I do not intend to suggest that these constitute the "best" theories or concepts from which to explicate read the text as cultural rhetoric for classroom practcies. In fact, there are any number of approaches, including feminist, postcolonial, and poststructural, which could usefully be applied to this text to feature aspects of it that I do not stress. However, these theories help me use *Alias Grace* to illustrate one application of the types of cultural

rhetorics I propose here. In other words, I have chosen these theories strategically to emphasize the importance of the underutilized concept of disicplinarity.

Reading *Alias Grace*

Before explicating Atwood's strategic rendering of the story, it will be useful to outline the "facts" that constitute the official story of the historical figure Grace Marks, upon whom the text is based. *Alias Grace* is a literary recounting of the 1843 real-life murder of Thomas Kinnear, a Canadian gentleman, and his maidservant and love interest, Nancy Montgomery. Immediately after the two bodies are found, Canadian authorities locate Grace Marks, a 16-year-old servant girl and James McDermott, a stable hand for the Kinnear estate. Both Marks and McDermott, who the press describe as Marks' "paramour," are tried, found guilty and sentenced to death. McDermott was subsequently hanged; however Marks' sentence was commuted to life in prison and she was eventually paroled after serving 23 years in prison. The story is complicated, moreover, by Grace's contention that she has no recollection of the murders.

Atwood structures her rhetorical treatment of the story around a fictionalized series of exchanges between Grace and Dr. Simon Jordon, a psychiatrist from the U.S. who is interested in opening up a lunatic asylum in the Canadian province where Marks is being incararated. These exchanges, which are variously told in first and third-person from both Grace's and Jordon's perspectives, are interspersed with a series of historical documents–prison records, newspaper accounts, poetry and folk songs--each demonstrating how Grace Marks has been historically "written" along a series of terms: evil, sick, insane, possessed, dim-witted and sexually promiscuous. Through this multi-

layered narrative style, Grace is revealed as one of the sites through which Victorian North America marks out boundaries along lines of class and gender against the backdrop of nascent industrialism.

Yet Atwood's treatment of the story presents an alterative narrative where Grace is given a voice that speaks back to the official narrative that pronounces her variously as simple, evil, and insane. Moreover, it places Grace's actions--the question of whether she participates in the murders remains unresolved--in the broader context of the various determinants that shape the experiences of a 19th-century immigrant maid. The rhetorical effect of the text, moreover, can be usefully explicated through cultural studies' concepts of determination, the function of "literature" and literary genres, multiple-perspective analysis and the technologies of writing.

Determination

As I have suggested in chapter two, Althusser's notion of overdetermination contributes significantly to cultural studies' understanding of the complex interplay of factors that shape individual consciousness. *Alias Grace* foregrounds such factors with attention to the interplay of family, gender, and nationality as they contribute to the way Grace sees herself. As a poor Irish immigrant whose mother died on the passage to the U.S. and whose father is an abusive drunk, Grace's lot in life seems to be determined by material and cultural circumstances that are well beyond her control. The text offers some indication of Grace's plight as an immigrant from Ireland. In Ireland, Grace's mother is purported to have married beneath her to a man with few prospects. Her Aunt Pauline sees this marriage as a bad sign for Grace's prospects, but encourages her to

"strive against" a similar fate. To Grace's aunt this fate is defined by the choice of a marriage partner and the only possible alternative for Grace is to "set a high price" for herself and, above all, to avoid marrying any "hail-fellow-well-met that should happen along the way [her] mother did" (104). Grace is constructed as a poor Irish woman whose options are demonstrably overdetermined by multiple influences: immigrant status of Irish as non-white, the relationship between science and emergent industrialism, and the construction of female as hysterical. This formulation applied to *Alias Grace*, therefore, helps to theorize through intertextual narrative devices the construction of identity as written subject.

Un-Disciplining the Text: *Alias Grace* as Post Historical Cultural Rhetoric

As the story of a "real-life" murderess whose guilt and sanity remain open questions, the text often reads like a whodunnit that--through the exchanges between Grace and Dr. Jordon--will ultimately tell the reader what "really happened." In addition, the text begins with a listing of Atwood's texts, where *Alias Grace* is found under the heading "fiction." Yet even with this self-conscious allusion to the story's un-truth, the text carries the trappings of Western fiction that imply a logical resolution to its subject. Fictional or not, *Alias Grace*, as a novel, carries the traces of narrative logic and its pretenses towards "truth" that are implicit in the historical novel.

As I have suggested in chapter two, British cultural studies has often taken as its focus the problematic distinctions implicit in humanist literary criticism. In cultural studies, literature functions as an important category, not because it references universal truths, but because as a historically privileged discursive form it raises a number of

important rhetorical questions. Atwood's novel, like much postmodern historical fiction, employs a variety of generic forms as a means through which to draw attention to their conceits.

Tony Bennett's cultural studies work is particularly appropriate to understanding Atwood's rhetorical use of the conventions of historical fiction. In response to Georg Lukacs' view that society and literature inhabit separate spheres where one (society) determines the form of the other (literary genres), Bennett argues that literature and society do not "operate as distinctive spheres" but are part of the same "sphere of social action" called literature (108).

As Bennett argues,

> The implications of this for the theory of genre are clear. Its tasks do not devolve upon the decipherment of the impress of socially determined 'forms of life' on the structures of literary forms and the orders of their succession. Rather, its concern is with the ways in which forms of writing which are culturally recognized as generically distinct in the context under investigation function within the 'forms of life'—the specific modes of organized sociality—of which they form a part. Its purpose, moreover, is to examine what genres *do* within and as parts of such modes of sociality rather than to reveal how their determined conditions speak through them. (109)

Bennett's focus on what literature and literary genres "do" suggests that the rhetorical critic look for the function or role that genre distinctions play in relation to

other social texts. Interestingly this approach extends beyond the "close reading" of a text that Rosteck associates with "traditional rhetorics" in favor of an approach that assumes a sociological or cultural perspective on the part of the critic. Bennett's challenge to the historical narrative upon which earlier Marxism was based, and the distinctions between social reality and literature that are maintained, in effect, challenge the critic to engage in a sort of meta-criticism of genres that we see in texts like *Alias Grace*.

Atwood's text serves as a particularly stark example of a rhetoric of generic forms that displaces the unified theory advocated by Lukacs. *Alias Grace* blends genres to confound the hermeneutic questions, implicit in the texts, that contribute to the mystique associated with the historical story of Grace Marks: Was Grace guilty of murder? Why did Grace kill the housemaster and maid? Was Grace sane at the time of the murders? Such questions function as the invisible devices through which most readers will address the question of a sensational murder. These questions are more pressing when the murderer is a 16-year-old servant whose actions so apparently countermand the existing social system and naturalized ideas about the "feebler sex." While Grace's material situation may have offered some explanation—she could, after all be of a "savage" or "inferior" race of people—such explanations did little to quell the anxieties and fascination invoked by the phrase "murderess." In fact, we can assume that the legend of Grace Marks was in part a response to the inability to satisfy the hermeneutic questions to which the murder of Thomas Kinnear gave rise. Thus, the novel, like the historical questions surrounding the story of Grace Marks, constitute a blending of genres--true

crime, detective ficition, historical fiction--that call attention to the limitations implicit in the assumption that such forms will ultimately supply the truth.

Alias Grace as Multi-Perspective Cultural Rhetoric

As a specific type of historical postmodern fiction, Atwood's text features multiple perspectives which, like British cultural studies, seek to foreground the disciplinary assumptions. The text itself, structured by the exchanges between Grace and Dr. Jordon, exposes the rhetoric of psychoanalysis through internal monologues. In particular, Dr. Jordon's pretense towards scientific objectivity is progressively undercut by his thoughts that reveal more than a disinterested perspective of women.

In her initial encounter with Simon Jordon, for instance, Grace quickly places him with the other "collectors" who presumably have come to gather her for their own interests. "Perhaps he is from a newspaper. Or else he is a travelling man, making a tour. They come in and they stare, and when then look at you, you feel as small as an ant, and they pick you up between finger and thumb and turn you around. And then they set you down and go away" (41).

As the story unfolds, Jordon's curious fascination with working women, in particular, is traced back to his own privileged upbringing. As the son of a U.S. textile manufacturer, Jordon's perspective is demonstrably shaped by his sexual fascination since his childhood with poor working women who helped raise him. While his exchanges with Grace are designed to create associations that tap into her unconscious, ironically, it is often Dr. Jordon for whom the process unearths complex associations

from which the reader can better understand the limitations of the claims to objectivity in pschoanalysis.

The exchanges between Dr. Jordon and Grace, moreover, juxtapose two critical perspectives as a means to show their limitations. Jordon is associated with science, privilege, reason, sanity, health and self-control. In contrast, Grace who is initially constructed (written) as the antithesis of reason is revealed, through Grace's dramatic monologues, as extremely intelligent. The psychiatrist-patient dialogue, then, is represented as a strategic process, guided by the therapist to lead to understanding on the part of the patient.

This model of scientism is resisted, however, through a narrative structure that gives Grace agency to write back against. In a disruption of the scientific model, the object is subjectified and, in an effective reversal, calls the model into question.

Dr. Jordon represents the optimism of psychoanalysis in light of Freud. Jordon's method are clearly derived from the assumption that the psyche is a repository of lost memories that can be effectively reactivated by through a series of cognitive links. Specifically, Jordon believes that he can trigger memories of the murder of Nancy Montgomery in the Kinnear root cellar by bringing Grace vegetables that might cause the association.

To understand Jordon's perspective, the text places it next to competing theories about the human psyche as represented in a series of letters to and from Dr. Jordon. One such perspective comes from Dr. Bannerling, the physician who ran an asylum Grace was held at prior to her removal to the penitentiary. Bannerling represents the dominant conceit that the "taint of insanity is in the blood, and cannot be removed with a little soft

soap and flannel" (71). In addition, Bannerling is convinced that Grace's claims to amnesia are false and that "She is as devoid of morals as she is of scruples, and will use any unwitting tool that comes to hand" (71).

Bannerling's skepticism is contrasted with "a crowd of well-meaning but feeble-minded persons of both sexes, as well as clergymen, who have busied themselves on her behalf' (71). Specifically, Reverend Verringer as a clergyman makes a strong distinction between the body and the mind (79). Yet the Reverend's differences with Dr. Bannerling are revealed to be politically motivated. Verringer says to Jordon, "You have heard from Dr. Bannerling, I suppose. He has been against [Grace] from the beginning. We on the Committee have appealed to him—a favourable report from him would have been invaluable to our cause—but he is intransigent. A Tory, of course, of the deepest dye—he would have all the poor lunatics chained up in straw, if he had his way; and all hanged who look sideways" (79).

The lines between religion and science become blurred with the introduction of Mrs. Quenell, a "Spiritualist and advocate of an enlarged sphere for women," and Dr. Jerome DuPont, a trained "Neuro-hypnotist" whose claims to science Jordon regards with extreme skepticism. Each of these characters represents a specific disciplinary perspective that organizes thinking about Grace in terms of guilt/innocence, sanity/insanity, and good/evil. Placing these competing perspectives side by side, in effect, reveals their logical blind spots.

Atwood, moreover, locates the dynamics of Grace's story in the economic context of nascent industrialism–a move that reveals the relationship between scientific humanism and patriarchy. The question of Grace's guilt or innocence, for instance,

becomes subordinated to contextual concerns. In addition to Jordon's Freudian perspective, the novel introduces different types of modern science and metaphysics, all making pronouncements on Grace Marks.

Jordon's psychoanalysis is associated with nascent industrialism through a series of exchanges with his mother who encourages him to forgo his psychiatric work in favor of manufacturing.

> I strongly urge that a manufactury would be far preferable, and although the textile mills are not what they were, due to the mismanagement of the politicians, who abuse the public trust unmercifully and become worse with every passing year; yet there are many other opportunities at present .... There is talk of a new Sewing Machine for use in the home, which would do exceedingly well if it might be cheaply produced; for every woman would wish to own such an item, which would save many hours of monotonous toil and unceasing drudgery. (51)

In this sense, scientific progress serves the material interests of the individual and its social effects are viewed in terms of the impact on women. Dr. Workman, one of the physicians who had treated Grace, moreover, also links Jordon's enterprise to the material, stressing that "Enterprises like yours are unfortunately much required at present, both in our own country and in yours, as due to the increased anxieties of modern life and the consequent stresses upon the nerves, the rate of construction can scarcely keep pace with the numbers of applicants" (49).

Throughout the text, the material and social contingencies that shape characters challenge the ideal of objective science. In fact, as Jordon recognizes, the illusion of

"disinterested science" is maintained only by the control of capital where "most of the best scientists. . . have private incomes, which allows them the possibility of disinterested research" (55). The relationship between science and religion in the text can only be understood with attention to the material conditions that make it possible. These conditions, moreover, reveal the extent to which both are underwritten by control of capital. In fact, *Alias Grace* represents science as a distinctly male endeavor and locates the metaphysical in the realm of the feminine.

Allowing Grace to "write back" against experts who are demonstrably limited by their disciplinary logics, Atwood dramatizes a multi-perspective approach to reading history through characterizations of a historical moment when empirical science, associated with emergent fields like medicine and psychology, was developing connections with industrialism. In the process, Atwood demonstrates the rhetorical use of writing as a disciplinary and disciplining technology.

Writing as Disciplinary Technology

British cultural studies also provides a critical vocabulary for understanding Atwood's novel as a rhetorical challenge to historical tendencies to employ writing as a disciplinary technology that enables one to "write" the other as a transparent reflection of reality. Technology as I have suggested elsewhere refers to the mechanisms that organize and legitimize knowledge. In this sense it draws on the Foucauldian concern for understanding how relationships between power and knowledge are organized and disseminated to maintain "regimes of truth" through specific institutions like the academy and the popular media.

Atwood's novel as a cultural rhetoric focuses attention on technologies of print and their historical legacies to show how Grace has been "written" and how Atwood enables her to "write back." For example, the novel begins with the following quotations:

> God knows I speak the truth, saying that you lie.
>
> –William Morris
>
> "The Defense of Guenevere"
>
> I have no Tribunal.
>
> –Emily Dickenson,
>
> *Letters*
>
> I cannot tell you what the light it, but I can tell you what it is not...What is the motive of the light? What is the Light?
>
> –Eugene Marais
>
> *The Soul of the White Ant*

Questions of Grace's guilt or innocence, sanity or insanity, are disrupted from the outset by these expressions. Morris's poetry is notably a Victorian writing of another legendary figure that mixes truth with lies and challenges the sanctity of the male to speak for the other. Morris's pronouncement on Guenevere, in this context, reads as the exertion of power without recourse to questions of historical shifts, imbuing the speaker with the right to make pronouncements of truth and falsity.

This passage is quickly subverted by Dickenson's perspective as a 19th-century woman whose truncated words speak to the veracity of Morris's complaint. Dickenson's

poet, a feminine subject without "tribunal," has no voice in constructing her own sense of truth or innocence. In essence, she is the subject of the male voice who can pronounce on her subjectivity. Marais's commentary further complicates the dialogic by suggesting that truth cannot be found in the first place. In fact, Marais's poem shifts the focus in attention from the truth/light to its absence, begging the apparently nonsensical question, "What is the motive of light? What is the light?"

These three quotations subvert the hermeneutic charge of the conventional historical novel, to provide some form of illumination by focusing on the "light." Morris's comments present the definitive pronouncement of truth regardless of history, residing in the authoritative "I." Dickenson's phrases disrupt the hermeneutic process itself, drawn as a tribunal which ostensibly functions to provide a fair an rationale hearing of evidence in attempt to render a judgement.

Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Cultural Rhetorics

In a recent interview with Julie Drew, Stuart Hall suggests that

> there is not a final, finished identity or position or self simply then to be produced by the writing. Any cultural practice plays a role in the construction of an identity. . . . Of course, writing, is also a production, a production of a version of the self. (207-208)

The assumption in *Alias Grace* that writing functions as a disciplinary technology provides a particularly useful point of entry into classroom practices which are designed to encourage students to consider how their own writing is mediated through its form. This focus, moreover, helps generate discussion and practices that look at the various

other forms through which individuals are disciplined. In my freshmen composition class, I have focused on the multiple-perspective and writing as a means through which to get students to consider their own culturally situated writing practices. Specifically, I have asked students to use *Alias Grace* as a model for their own culling together of multiple textual forms in a narrative.

In so doing, I have found it useful to have students employ hypertext technologies which often foreground the links between different discursive forms. Specifically, I have had students write a series of responses to the text and to related issues of their choosing. Students have employed the Internet to focus on and research various issues related to the novel including constructions of gender, nineteenth-century maidservants, contemporary maids, and the industrial revolution. For example, one student focused on the fact that many of the quotations at the beginning of chapters in *Alias Grace* came from Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearing*. In fact, this student found that Atwood first encountered the story of Grace Marks in her reading of this text. Incensed at the class-based references in Moodie's "writing" of Grace, the student devoted her project to "unwriting" the specific references of Susana Moodie. She looked at the travel narrative in which Moodie describes her encounter with Grace and constructed her own counter narrative. She found that the rhetorical force of her argument, like many of the constructions in *Alias Grace,* came by juxtaposing Moodie's words with parts of the novel and some of the few extant historical accountings of the real Grace Marks. In this sense, Atwood's text provided a useful model for cultural rhetorical writing practices that focused on the intertextual technologies through which individuals are "written."

Consistent with the spirit, if not the form, of Atwood's text, I have also asked students to create their own narrative rhetorical responses to the issues in the text. They were then required to link their pages together to create yet another narrative. In so doing, the class mediated the institutional requirements for students to write certain types of essays, and to develop certain skills writing skills. The focus on the forms, technologies and rhetorical effects often encouraged students to think of their academic writing as a technology that can be usefully framed to subvert the dominant form of the essay. For example, in one course students wrote a conventional essay on an issue related to the novel and placed their essays on the WEB. They were then asked to consider how they would like to frame this essay with other prose and images and what effect this act of framing would have on what their initial essays "meant."

Many of the students, borrowing from Atwood (and with some encouragement from their instructor), used this exercize as a chance to comment on the conventions of the essay, their perceptions of its purpose and their relationship to the academic situation in which their writing took place. In the end students created and read a variety of perspectives which, although they included conventional essays, provided them an opportunity to interrogate their own writing and the writing of others, as disciplinary technologies with social implications.

Conclusion

Anti-foundational postmodernism presents new challenges with respect to rhetorical research and scholarship. Approaching a text like *Alias Grace* as rhetorical arguments presents the opportunity for students to look at their own writing as

technologically mediated productions that respond and contribute to the disciplinary formations that shape individual subjectivities. This employment of cultural studies and rhetoric, therefore, speaks back to the previous chapter by suggesting that compositionists are at a critical juncture where we can now concern ourselves less with disciplinary drives that might preclude the use of imaginative fiction and more with *how* using literature can be used to facilitate classroom practices. The next chapter takes a similar tack by extending the criticism to a consideration of how Julie Dash's postcolonial film, *Daughters of the Dust*, can also be employed as a specific type of cultural rhetoric.

Chapter Five
Cultural Rhetorics, Visual Rhetorics and Classroom Practices in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*

Critical literature in rhetoric and composition increasingly points to contemporary concerns over what counts as legitimate student reading and writing practices. While some theorists ascribe value to the actual effects of student writing,[25] others focus on the social implications of language as it is read in popular forms.[26] As I have argued throughout this project, what I find interesting and provocative about these arguments is the lack of attention given to the institutional conditions shaping textual production. In this chapter I argue that a visual rhetoric which explores institutional and cultural constraints influencing textual production is a necessary, and often overlooked, part of a critical pedagogy that seeks to engage students to participate effectively in democratic practices. A visual rhetoric is defined as the exploration of film and media images and their production practices in order to critique dominant assumptions about what counts as legitimate knowledge and how that knowledge relates to power in society. Visual texts are especially critical for engaging students in an increasingly media-saturated society.

In *Textual Carnivals*, Susan Miller critiques rhetorics, which ascribe value to student writing that is detached from everyday situations. In particular, Miller cites the process-based composition course that "values the student for activity, reflection, and 'meanings' that are entirely contained in the community constituted by the classroom. These are not activities that do anything in particular, or that have 'meaning' about anything in particular"(97). The process in these courses, then, is unconcerned with the

[25] Cf. Miller, Susan. *Textual Carnivals*, 97.
[26] Cf. Berlin, James A. *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures*, 117.

"actual results" a text might bring about in the real world (100). Value and meaning are empty concepts because of the classroom setting in which they take place. Miller's argument, then, implies a distinction from practices outside academic and real writing, where academic writing can only be validated with reference to activities that extend outside of the classroom. This focus invalidates academic practice as irredeemably "inside," in contrast to those practices which result in some kind of action. Students in the classroom, however, write with a number of possible reasons, the relative utility of which cannot easily be enhanced with reference to an "outside" of the classroom. Even the process-based composition approaches that Miller challenges operate within a particular institutional setting and involve complex processes of negotiation.

Other recent literature in composition and rhetoric reflects a growing interest in the use of visual texts, such as film and television, to engage students in critical inquiries in writing processes. Berlin suggests the use of media images to engage students with academic discourses and to promote democratic classroom spaces. In Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric, students read to locate gender and class ideologies in television programs like *Roseanne* to explore the ways television interacts with dominant social formations. Moreover, Berlin's exploration of such rhetorics in *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Cultures*, argues persuasively for attention to institutional and ideological factors. Berlin's description of his approach towards *Roseanne*, however, focuses on important broad cultural effects of language usage and evades the implications of localized relationships between production apparatuses and filmmakers. Berlin's analysis of *Roseanne*, for instance, raises provocative questions that fall beyond the scope of his ideological approach: What conditions enable *Roseanne*, as one of the few "working

class" programs, to be produced? What, if any, compromises did producers make in developing the program? What constraints and limitations did Barr face as a female producer? Berlin does well to encourage a close reading of ideologies in visual mediums, but ultimately his approach tends to obscure the processes of production, potentially undermining students' abilities to relate the texts to social formations (76-93).

Julie Dash's 1991 film, *Daughters of the Dust* provides a useful example of a visual rhetoric. As a site for classroom practices, it focuses on the relationship between the construction historical knowledge and power relations.[27] Mary Louise Pratt provides the useful concept of "contact zones" to describe sites where "the processes of negotiation from specific locations over what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge is related to power."[28] Adding institutional and material constraints to Pratt's formulation, the following analysis of the film focuses on *three* contact zones: the culture industry, technologies of historical representation, and authorial subject position. The final section, "Implications for the Classroom," discusses specific ways that visual rhetorics can be used to encourage students to view their own writing as embedded within processes of negotiation with historically-specific institutional and cultural determinants.

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[27] *Daughters of the Dust* employs a number of conventions of postcolonial fiction. Postcolonial texts are especially useful sources for visual rhetoric because they focus on the specific mechanisms by which knowledge is produced about marginalized groups. They tend to look at historic geographical and temporal conditions surrounding textual production. Critiquing the gaps of traditional scholarship, writers such as Toni Morrison, and Gabriel García Márquez and José David Saldívar stress that texts operate as strategic responses to colonial logics that continue to naturalize dominant ideologies along lines of race, class, gender and ethnicity. However, postcolonial discourses have also tended to focus on strategies located within the written texts, ignoring production, so this line of inquiry could use further exploration.

The Culture Industry: Visual Rhetorics and the U.S. Film Industry

The U.S. culture industry is an often-underemphasized contact zone with important implications for the relationship between material conditions and cultural forms. Questions regarding aesthetic value and historical legitimacy are often mediated in the invisible processes, impacting which films get produced and the terms upon which a film enters the market. While a close reading of a particular text provides insights into dominant ideologies, it often ignores these other important institutional determinants. The following analysis of the culture industry begins with a reading of the ideological implications to be found in the text itself. It then contextualizes this reading in relation to the specific conditions Dash faced as she attempted to get her film produced. Finally, an analysis of the culture industry returns to the text to explicate the implications of this reading on questions of aesthetic value and historical validity that will later be developed into classroom practices surrounding the value of student writing.

A close reading of the text, without consideration of its production, provides insights into the film's development of Dash's narrative as a critique of traditional historical representations of African Americans. The film centers on the Gullah culture, ancestors of slaves, living on islands off the coast of South Carolina. The film focuses on a single day in 1902, and concerns the strife in the Peazant family as some members prepare to leave the geographically isolated culture and migrate to mainland United States.

Dash's historical film can be read as a strategic response to specific contemporary institutional constraints that repress "subversive" films. For example, the narrative voice

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[28] Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes : Travel Writing and Transculturation.* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

states that the story takes place on a "significant day." Initially the audience is positioned to view the day as historically significant through references to a particular date, Aug. 19, 1902, and a particular location, IBO Island. As the film progresses, however, it becomes clear that the day's significance is contested and subject to each family member's perspective. The matriarch Nana Peazant, for example, is upset that the move is causing her family to be "coming apart." Her daughter Viola, on the other hand, attributes historical significance to the family's move towards "progress" and "civilization." Several other characters add their own layers of meaning. Eula, another of Nana Peazant's daughters, is distraught over a pregnancy resulting from rape, and her husband Eli's perceived threat to his manliness. Yellow Mary, a prodigal daughter, returns from Cuba "ruint" with cynicism and disdain for Viola's idealism. The interplay of these perspectives, often dramatized in heated exchanges, argues against a single historical perspective. As the day unfolds, Dash's use of vivid and dynamic visual images and dialogue dramatizes the inability of traditional historical forms of representation to offer anything more than a reduction of a collective history linked, as Nana Peazant says, to "those who came before and those that will come." The question of significance, then, becomes a multi-voiced challenge to the idea of a single perspective historical accounting, inviting a series of generative questions. For whom is the day significant? Is the day meant to be historically significant? Is the film historically significant? Is the film historical at all?

The text itself, then, presents an ideological challenge to the colonial practices that represented African American history as static and univocal. Ideological critiques, as Stephen Slemon suggests, are "mediated through the colonialist educational apparatus,"

including the film industry, to effect "cultural domination by consent"(4). The Gramscian notion of domination by consent is particularly important to understanding the United States film industry as a set of ideological practices that can be read through the cinematic texts. Although no text is every either totally subversive or totally hegemonic, some—and frequently these films make less money and might be less popular—more consistently challenge normative westernized conceptions. *Daughters of the Dust* is one compelling example of an oppositional film that rigorously subverts normalized western concepts of story telling.[29]

A close reading of texts often provides important insights into dominant ideologies and the ways they are reinscribed and resisted. Yet the focus on ideologies in relation to broad social formations practices often obscures the extent to which matters of aesthetics, or what seems to make a movie worthwhile or "good," are mediated by contemporary cultural politics and institutional constraints. Dash, who had spent ten years researching the Gullahs, found it extremely difficult to secure the funding for its production. When she approached the major Hollywood production companies, all refused to fund the film. She ultimately had to secure production money from non-Hollywood sources like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, in exchange for broadcast rights after the film's release in public cinemas. Additional difficulties arose as Dash attempted to distribute the finished project. Even after entering the film with some success in the Toronto and Sundance Film Festivals, it was ignored by large Hollywood

[29] Although "oppositional" or postcolonial films" provide excellent sources for visual rhetorics because they often foreground issues surrounding the politics of representation, I have also used texts which are less subversive. For instance, other movies I've found useful for these purposes are *Mississippi Masala*, and *The Quick and the Dead*. Although alternate arguments could be made for ways in which these films reinscribe traditional norms of gender, sexuality, class and race, this concern does not limit their potential for providing insights into various ways that dominant knowledges are subverted. Indeed, 'mixed' texts are

distributors. Finally, a small distributor, Kino International, agreed to distribute the film through small "art" theaters. Although it eventually became very popular among primarily Black middle class audiences, the lack of advanced billing and limited distribution channels suggest that the film suffered from a tendency in the U.S. film industry to ignore films that veer too widely from mainstream conventions (Rule C15, C17).

Dash's experiences reflect a historical pattern in Hollywood, guided by market conditions, of not financing unconventional films.[30] Mark Crispen Miller argues that the film industry took a significant turn in 1985 when anti-trust legislation opened the doors for large corporate acquisitions of independent film companies such as Lorimar, Cannon, New World, Atlantic, De Laurentis, Alive and Island. The legislative act, Miller contends, put control of cinematic production in the hands of corporate giants like Disney and Time Warner for whom the movie industry constitutes one segment in an overarching industry guided by profit motive. The effect was a shift from films with "a tragic or subversive view to a posture both reverential and promotional" of national and corporate interests (6-10).

These market conditions provide insight into how we read the aesthetic qualities of Dash's film and her conscious decision "to subordinate market forces to spiritual forces as determining criteria for *Daughters*" (Tate 90). Dash's treatment of the immigration/migration story, for example, can be read as a challenge to the "reverential"

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often engage the most spirited and thoughtful inquiries into the relationship between politics and knowledge.

[30] Vietnamese filmmaker and critic, Trinh T. Minh-ha describes the invisible relationship between media and aesthetics as follows: "standardization and sameness in variation is the unacknowledged agenda of media suppliers and consumers. . .the goal is to render power sufficiently invisible so as to control more efficaciously the widest number down to the smallest detail of existence." For an excellent discussion of

expectations of the cinema industry. This reading is supported by Dash's characterization of Viola, Nana Peazant's daughter, who embodies this celebratory position in the film. Viola wholly accepts the promises of the mainland to provide "education, wealth and civilization." Dramatically opposite Viola is her sister Yellow Mary, who has returned from the mainland with a caustic cynicism about both the promise of the mainland and the "salt water Negroes" to whom she's returned. Viola's idealism, which resonates with the rhetoric of Christianity and the United States nationalism, is ultimately deflated in a crucial scene where she is asked to kiss a Bible which Nana Peazant has wrapped with one of her Voodoo religious icons. Her willingness to finally embrace the dual religious icons calls into question the exclusivity upon which western historical teleologies are built. To refuse the Bible as heresy would be to do violence to her past, a dangerous act in a society that embraces a circular history conception of history where past and future are interminably connected. While she is willing to embrace Christian ideals and to associate them with a move forward, Viola is unwilling to live with the implications of a faith that denies her connection to her mother and her ancestors. This overlaying of alternative perspectives is consistent with what Stephen Slemon argues is the primary strategy of postcolonial literary texts, "to position the oppositional and reiterative textual responses of post-colonial cultures in dialectical relation to their colonialist precursors" (4).

Ultimately we gain a good deal from reading Dash's film in relation to dominant ideologies that ignore or marginalize the experiences of African Americans. However, while this conception benefits from a sophisticated understanding of the way texts

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the relationship between cinema and market conditions see, Trinh, Minh-Ha. *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation and Cultural Politics*. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 86-91.

operate as ideologies to effect "domination by consent," it doesn't encourage the reader to view the text itself as the certified outcome of a long, frequently formidable process of legitimization and silencing. Reading Dash's aesthetic through local production processes, however, argues that one level of "significance" in the historical film is to be found in its irreverent response to the very contemporary implications of institutional constraints that endorse celebratory immigration/migration stories. In contrast to the tendency to consider a film which takes place in the American past as divorced from the present, production analysis encourages an awareness of how history and historical knowledge emerge only as part of an ongoing process of elimination, reconstruction and sanctification.

Technologies of Visual Rhetorics

Another underemphasized contact zone with important implications for the way we view visual rhetorics can be found in film's unique capacity to dramatize the technologies that organize and legitimize particular types of knowledge. Technologies of visual rhetorics refer to the mechanisms used to dramatize the organization of power relations. Although written rhetorics often dramatize such technologies, it is important to consider the unique ways that film as a rhetorical form embodies its distinct technological potential. This section explores the ways Dash represents and employs technologies in the film to subvert traditional notions of historical authenticity. It then explores these uses as critiques of contemporary representational politics. The implications of Dash's commentary on technologies of representation for classroom practices are particularly important and will be developed in the final section of this paper.

In *Daughters of the Dust*, cinematic technology enables Dash to dramatize ways in which relationship between power and knowledge is organized and disseminated. In particular, she focuses on technologies of photographs and writing as colonial apparatuses that produce historical records. While it is important to read these technologies as they are explicitly portrayed in the film, it is equally important to consider Dash's film as a particular type of contemporary technology impacting our understanding of the past. In this section I initially look at how Dash disrupts colonial technologies and therefore colonial logics. I will then focus on Dash's self-referential critique of film itself as a technology that perpetuates racial discrimination.

Within the film, Dash inverts colonial logics by concentrating on the photographer instead of the photograph to help tell her story. Throughout the film Mr. Snead positions the Islands' inhabitants in poses that will likely become part of the family's historical record. As a light- skinned African American from the mainland that speaks "proper English," Snead is decidedly an outsider whose sole purpose is to collect the record of people he doesn't appear to understand. His authority, like that of the colonial ethnographer, derives solely from his ability to use scientific expertise to construct an authoritative record. Snead's authority is dramatically subverted by the supernatural Unborn child who flits in and out of the view finder, causing Snead to momentarily question his own observations. The child's timelessness, which allows her to visit the indigo producing ancestors, is an attractive alternative to Snead's rigid faith in the merits of modern technology. Photography ultimately becomes problematic because it pretends to present an apparently unbiased representation. Dash, however, uses film as

a means to shift the focus from the photographic record, to the process of photographing itself.

Dash's film, moreover, can be viewed as a self-referential critique of a contemporary tendency to view cinema as a reflection of reality. Dash reveals the illusionary technology of film through her representation of a child's manual movie camera, where a series of images of a United States city are turned with a lever to provide the illusion of movement. This image—between photograph and motion picture—suggests a self-conscious critique of all forms of representation to render a reflection of reality. This self-referential treatment of cinema is suggestive of the explicitly subjectivity of the film. In contrast to the scientific forms of representation associated with Mr. Snead these images demonstrate the limitations of science to reproduce reality, giving added credence to Nana Peazant's haunting shouts, "I remember and I recall" as viable sources of historical significance. Moreover through Nana Peazant, Dash presents a challenge to colonial conceptions of history. For Nana the past is carried by "Those eighteenth century Africans watch[ing] us."

Dash's focus on photographic processes and her self-referential critique of the moving picture can also be viewed as an argument against contemporary exclusive media practices. Dash alludes to the historical aspect of practices of exclusion, stating, "In my film, I'm asking the audience to sit down for two hours and listen to what black women are talking about. When have we been asked that before, from a female point of view?" (qtd. in Rule C15-C17). Read in the context of dominant cinematic practices, Dash's challenge to the politics of representation in the colonial past establishes a necessary connection between contemporary colonial practices that exclude alternative historical

accounts. On one level, Dash's parodic treatment of Mr. Snead and her self-referential critique of cinema can be viewed as part of a broader attack on colonial forms of representation. It is also possible to gain, from a close reading of the film itself, a criticism of contemporary politics of representation. Indeed, Dash's critique of film suggests such a reading that is not necessarily dependent upon understanding the complex institutional processes of negotiation involved in contemporary cinematic production. However, consideration of these processes challenges a broader cultural tendency to view the turn of the century racial politics as an empirical historical object, divorced from contemporary circumstances.

Displacing the Colonial Subject

Viewing the unified subject as a contact zone has important implications for the way visual rhetorics are used to legitimize and challenge particular types of knowledge. Dash's focus on history as the producer of subjective interpretations, limited by vantagpoints and cultural biases, can be located within the text. Read in the context of institutional constraints and the cultural politics surrounding the film's production, however, Dash's film can be viewed as a critique of the perseverance of one of the primary assumptions of the western historical narrative: the unified subject. This section focuses on two instances of Dash's challenge to the subject. First, I will explicate her critique of the authorial or ethnographic subject position that has historically presumed the authority to speak for the "other." I will then look explore Dash's fragmented subjectivities. While it is important to read these critiques as they are explicitly portrayed in the film, it is equally important to consider Dash's film as a challenge to contemporary

adherence to the autonomous subject. Such cinematic treatments are especially useful for helping students understand complex notions of subjectivity.

To disrupt the historical and contemporary pretense of cinematic objectivity, Dash employs conventions specific to mainstream cinema to initially assume an authoritative, objective stance. Specifically she supplies apparently objective textual signposts that orient the viewer to a particular place of origin by presenting written text:

> At the turn of the century, Sea Island Gullahs, descendents of African slaves, remained isolated from the mainland of South Carolina and Georgia.

This objective authorial subject position is established only to be displaced through a sequence of written, audible, and visual images that disassemble and fragment the authoritative subject. The presumably objective background information creates the expectation that the narrative to follow will correspond with the way empirical reality has formally been disseminated in western cultures. This orienting voice, however, is supplemented by another written statement that begins to reveal a crack in objective stance:

> As a result of their isolation, the Gullahs created and maintained a distinct, imaginative and original African American culture.

In contrast to the descriptive information of the first lines, this evaluative language reveals a slight shift in narrative perspective. Words like "imaginative" and "original" suggest that the group being described has its own agency. Importantly, the posture of ethnographic objectivity is subverted through the suggestion that "culture" functions not as a static entity to be described by others, but that it is "created" by the individuals who participate in it.

The third phrase provides a more forceful disruption of the authority of ethnographer to "write" another culture. Informing the audience that "Gullah communities recalled, remembered and recollected much of what their ancestors brought with them from Africa," Dash presents an alternative to empirical histories and undercuts the authority of the omniscient historical subject.

The first shot, a brief, slow-motion close up of two hands holding cupping dust is a disorienting departure from the black and white words with which the film began. The following images of the community's matriarch, Nana Peazant, fully clothed and immersed in water, provides a brief hint that perhaps she will be the source of such "remembrances." Her words, however, suggest an alternative to familiar conventions of a centralized narrative perspective:

> I am the first and the last,
> I am the honored one and the scorned one.
> I am the whore and the holy one.
> I am the wife and the virgin,
> I am the barren one
> And many are my daughters
> I am the silence that you cannot understand
> I am the utterance of my name.

This pattern of visual orientation, written words, and disorientation through visual images which continues throughout the film's narrative, performs the multiple subjectivities inhabiting Nana Peazant's "I." While she is a primary character in the enfolding debates over migration, the film dramatizes, through the sequence of images, a sense of communal identity at odds with the conventional singularity of the western narrative. The shot of Nana Peazant is followed by a sequence of misty images: A woman in a white dress, a couple floating on a boat, and man praying. These images further suggest a radical deformation of the authoritative text with which the film began.

Nana Peazant's words, moreover, establish a shift in subjectivity from the ethnographic "the Gullahs" as a community known by its place and time, to a collective, circular subjectivity where one voice is both "first" and "last," "wife" and "virgin." Dash again calls attention to the limitations of all historical accountings with her reference to "the silence that you cannot understand." Yet this silence is different from the silent voice of the ethnographer who speaks for the Gullahs. The limitations of understanding any group of people are inherent to all histories that attempt to establish a single story of what happened. The film accepts this limitation and because it regards all histories as contingent, seeks to establish the credibility of alternative, circular, historical accounts through recollection and imagination.

The text presents the limits of "recollection, remembrance, and recall" along with the disorienting series of images in the opening sequence of *Daughters of the Dust* to provide a linkage to the past buried by the traditional history or, here more metaphorically, dust. Importantly, a mixture of visual, audio, and verbal images dramatizes the apparent limitation of any image to convey the "truth." In effect, the multiplicity of forms enabled by the visual medium ruptures meaning from conventional (western) systems of logic, with its testaments to truth, and the viewer is left to determine the "significance" of infinite possibilities for meaning. The images then provide the basis for the unconventional narrative perspective of the Unborn Child who represents the link between past, present and future. Over shots of the community she asserts another claim to subjectivity through her extended links to the family through time and space: "My story begins on the eve of my family's migration. My story begins before I was born.

My Great-Great Grandmother, Nana Peazant saw her family come apart. Her flowers to bloom in a distant frontier. And then there was my Daddy's problem."

This close reading of the text provides rich insights into the film's ideological critique of dominant colonial and neo-colonial formations. Yet the focus on multiple subjectivities inhabiting Nana Peazant must also be considered as a response to the power dynamics that remain masked by third person authorial subjects. Through relentless fragmenting of the narrative subject, Dash provides a commentary on past and present practices of writing the "other."

Dash's use of cinema to construct a contemporary rhetorical argument, therefore, is enhanced by consideration of the linkages she makes between historical imperial logics and contemporary practices. Read outside of the context of contemporary racial and gendered politics in the film industry, moreover, the film may actually reinscribe a sense of disconnectedness between past and present, under the assumption that contemporary society has progressed beyond colonialism. So-called postcolonial discourses argue forcefully that a view of the historical past as a separate knowable object, rather than as sites of ongoing contestation and debate, is in danger of simply repressing those colonial logics and related material conditions that maintain in contemporary society.

A similar logic, I will argue, operates in writing classrooms that rely on unexplored distinctions between student writing processes divorced from sanctified knowledge. Susan Miller's distinction between process writing and "actual" practices is one example of this tendency to rely on too great a separation between student writing and other, sanctified forms of knowledge. A visual rhetoric, as I stated above, is part of a pedagogical approach that seeks to complicate these distinctions, emphasizing a critical

approach that places student rhetorics in relation to multiple rhetorical forms, including but certainly not limited to film. Visual rhetorics, moreover, provide a particularly rich starting point, because of the increasing occurrence of multiple visual media forms in student's everyday lives. In the following section, I will explore the broader pedagogical implications of this rhetorical emphasis by offering specific strategies for using visual rhetorics like Dash's film for classroom practices that seek to demystify the complex processes of negotiation that go into all forms of textual production.

Classroom Implications of Visual Rhetorics: Negotiating Significance in Student Writing

In *Shooting for Excellence*, Jabari Mahiri argues that "As educators we ask students to study things we have seen to be important in our world, but our success with them also depends on our efforts to understand things they have deemed important in theirs"(116-117). To understand the "things" students value and that we, as educators, value ourselves, we might start by acknowledging the terms upon which such exchanges take place. Reading *Daughters of the Dust* as a visual rhetoric provides an alternative to conventional rhetorical tendencies to avoid the impact of production on textual practices. By combining ideological critique with analysis of production constraints, we get a richer view of the material, institutional and ideological terms Dash negotiated. While the film provides an excellent source for reading the particularities of cinema and cinematic production, the ultimate purpose of a visual rhetoric is to encourage

students to view their own writing practices as the effect of processes of negotiation in specific contact zones.

Rather than suggesting that we somehow equate the capital-intensive processes of cinema production with student writing, this approach uses a reading of the film to encourage students to explore the terms upon which they engage with instructors to negotiate similar their own material and ideological constraints. It will be clear that *Daughters of the Dust* was strategically selected to focus on these concerns. At the same time classroom practices should be flexible enough to generate additional contact zones that emerge in the classroom. For example, the above film raises important questions surrounding collaborative groups as contact zones that impact textual production. What is important, in this visual rhetorical approach, is that visual texts be used to encourage students' self-conscious negotiations of the terms of exchange upon which they read and write. What follows, then, are specific practices surrounding students' linking Dash's text to their own engagement with the culture industry, technologies and subjectivities.

The Culture Industry: Visual Rhetorics, the Academy and Student Writing

Film's unique institutional setting, demonstrated in the discourses surrounding Dash's film, provides a provocative framework for discussing the hierarchy of textual values within the institution. This section explores classroom strategies that use Dash's film to explore the material and institutional conditions influencing students' reading and writing. It begins with a series of questions concerning the terms of exchange upon

which the student writes in the classroom. It then considers academic definitions of aesthetics and history that shape their readings of cinema in the classroom, and concludes with a discussion of a classroom practice that questions the criteria for "good" student writing.

This focus challenges Susan Miller's assumption that students frequently perform activities that do not "do anything in particular, or . . . have 'meaning' about anything in particular" (97). When asked why they are writing, students will often provide answers that like: "I write for a grade," or "I write to improve my skills for later." Such claims often reduce complex motives into simple apparently obvious purposes. However, it is worthwhile to consider how such claims might be probed further. What, for instance, does a grade represent regarding the students' ability to strategically negotiate academic expectations? What does it represent to students about their relationship to the academy as a discursive site? And how do expectations about future skills reflect a complex understanding of the terms upon exchange upon which students negotiate the contemporary academy?

A visual rhetorics challenges the perceived stability of institutional definitions through such questions and by introducing definitions which frame aesthetic value and historical legitimization as open questions that students will have to negotiate. A postcolonial visual rhetoric, like Dash's film, is part of a pedagogy that opens up questions of aesthetics in relations to the historical and material conditions influencing what counts as knowledge for the academy and for students. *Daughters of the Dust* provides just one source in an ongoing interrogation of the conditions attendant to all forms of textual production. In a cultural context where creative texts are often viewed

and read as unified, autonomous expressions—as something that the student should "get"—I have found it useful to begin the course by calling assumptions regarding aesthetic value and legitimate historical knowledge into question. *Daughters of the Dust* is read through definitions of historical and aesthetic texts that frame the discussion and provides a context for students to create their own understanding of the text.

Before introducing the film, students discuss two definitions of historical and aesthetic texts each. Historical texts are defined as 1.) Objectivist: those texts that seek to present as close a reproduction of facts, events and people from the past. and 2.) Culturalist: texts defined as historical by those in a position to make distinctions between historical and non-historical texts. After some discussion of the limitations and possibilities of each definition we turn to definitions of literary/aesthetic texts which are similarly introduced as 1) Formalist: those texts which employ creative devices to elicit emotional or intellectual responses and 2) Culturalist: Those texts which are called literary/aesthetic by those in the position to so name them.

While these definitions are problematic in terms of contemporary theoretical developments, they provide a taxonomy from which the class may begin to frame the relationship between their own valued texts and those that the academy implicitly or explicitly privileges. This taxonomy was particularly useful, for example, in a recent discussion of Makaveli's (Tupac Shakur) "Me and My Girlfriend." Many of the students decided that aesthetic concerns are highly personal yet at the same time acknowledged the institutional tendency to marginalize rap lyrics. By calling these texts into question, students are ready to broach the relationship between aesthetics and material constraints at work in *Daughters of the Dust*.

The questions that emerge from a discussion of aesthetic value and historical legitimacy in Dash's film provide a promising framework for exploring the relationship between perceptions of aesthetic and historical value and the circumstances surrounding the production of texts. Students who research questions surrounding the production of Dash's text begin to locate institutional and material constraints that too often go unnoticed in rhetorical analysis. Rather than supplying definitive answers regarding institutional politics, the difficulties associated with Dash's text, framed in relation to the definitions presented, generate promising lines of inquiry: What do her difficulties suggest about the racial politics of the film industry? What other visual forms support or complicate Dash's claim that there is an "aura of invisibility around black women film makers"? (qtd. in Rule C17). Does the film itself comment on the contemporary politics of cinematic production?

An important shift in the class takes place when students are asked to explore similar questions regarding their own written productions. While there is no shortage of ready responses for what constitutes "good writing," questions surrounding the mechanisms that influence these conceptions are much more complex. Ultimately the dichotomies presented in my definitions of aesthetic and historical texts provide the framework from which student rhetorics will be negotiated. Discussions of what defines good writing, then, are cast in terms of a similar dichotomy. 1.) Traditional definition: Good student writings are those texts that employ proper narrative conventions to clearly develop a sustained coherent argument; and 2.) Culturalist definition: Good student writing is that which is called good writing by those who are in a position to make distinctions between good and poor writing.

The class presents a series of assumptions or definitions from which their own writing will be evaluated. In the context of the writing classroom, the perception of subjectivity is often a good starting point and students will inevitably argue that grading policies in writing are often subjective. When asked to clarify they begin to approach something similar to a "culturalist" definition of good writing—that which those in power determine to be good writing. At the same time, I encourage students to consider those factors that they might argue make all writing good or which are essential to good academic writing. A list from a recent class reads as follows: "clarity, interesting, good grammar, addresses audience." This "Formalist" or "Objectivist" definition presents the source for classroom discussion of the terms upon which their writing will be graded. However, as our analysis of the film suggests, such questions are often complicated by factors external to the finished project.

Reading Dash's film through these definitions, then, helps generate questions directly related to student writing. For example, it is important to ask students what factors influence their desire to write a certain way in the classroom? It is often difficult to extend this conversation beyond grading and classroom concerns. However, the vocabulary provided by an analysis of *Daughters of the Dust*, proves useful. Students, for example, are encouraged to consider the following questions: What are the material or monetary factors involved in your own textual productions? What are the cultural relationships between you and your perceived audience? Is there a "dominant" idea of good writing to which the classroom, instructor or institution subscribes? Is there room for you to subordinate such an idea for alternative purposes? These questions often place the instructor in the dubious position of opening up grading criteria to student debate.

Yet, this position is preferable to the tendency to obscure the terms of exchange upon which students are asked to produce texts.

Technologies of Student Visual Rhetorics

Dash's film provides an excellent example of the use of technology to mix textual forms for aesthetic and political effect. As mentioned above, technologies here refer to the institutional mechanisms that organize and legitimate specific knowledges. Dash's text provides a framework for a classroom focus on modes of visual rhetorics through the WEB Technology. The WEB provides any number of opportunities for students to construct themselves, their personal histories, and the histories of others through various mediums. One specific example I've used in my class entails students' creating their own immigration narratives, drawing from the wide array of sources on the WEB and their own narratives. Initially students are asked to create as comprehensive and as objective a narrative as possible as a means to getting at the "whole story." Often students will incorporate authoritative sources such as written artifacts and photographs. However, they do so as a means to subverting or reinscribing the narrative. Ultimately, this exercise urges students to consider narrative gaps and how they might fill them in. Students are then asked to construct their own alternative histories, a process that suggests subjectivity of historical narratives.

A similar approach employs a contingent structure that the instructor has created, but which, with hypertext technology, students can manipulate. At Michigan State University students have access to a CD-ROM called *American Identity* which provides such a structure by creating an interactive package of the immigration/migration

experiences of five groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Germans, Poles, and Jewish Americans. The experiences of these groups are represented through photographic images and written texts. Initially this program was designed to encourage students to understand and compare different experiences. However, this technology also enables the instructor to foreground the construction process itself, by asking students to consider what is repressed and what is emphasized in the narrative.

In each case, the student's reading practices and his/her construction of a narrative of immigration is viewed as a process of negotiation in which questions of empirical reality are complicated by institutional processes of representation. In other words, students are encouraged to create their own sense of history by considering the implications of each decision. Viewed in this way narrative devices like parody, intertextuality, and multiple perspectives operate as strategies with ideological implications. In essence, hypertext technology allows students to consider, through various textual forms, the myriad ways they must negotiate myriad influences to construct their own narratives. What limitations are inherent to the technology? What possibilities does it afford? How can students create different narrative strategies that employ texts constructed by others for their own purposes?

Displacing the Student Subject

The often-difficult notion of authorial subjectivity is critical to understanding the ways students rhetorically negotiate specific institutional and cultural domains. The opening sequence of the film which enacts a sequence from third-person authorial subjectivity to a single individual inhabiting multiple subjectivities provides an excellent

conceptual framework for student to consider their own assumptions. Students are encouraged, therefore, to explore their own multiple subjectivities through various discursive forms including letters, email, written assignments and WEB pages.

At the same time, moreover, Dash's film introduces important considerations for how institutions construct individuals. As Susan Miller argues, classroom practices often assume a "presexual, precultural" subject who is shaped by classroom practices to construct appropriate student subject positions.[31] The tendency to view students as monolithic is particularly acute at my college of 40,000 undergraduates. It is possible, however, to develop assignments that encourage students to consider the multiple ways in which the university constructs them and to develop strategies for intervention. In the aftermath of student riots on my campus, for example, students were asked to write their responses to the event in which 10,000 students started fires, overturned cars and looted businesses. They were then asked to consider the ways that "students" were being written in various institutional sites, including television reports, the university newspaper, and a WEB-Site set up by the university to elicit tips for prosecution. Regardless of their official "position" on the riots, most of the students noted a stark discrepancy between their own understanding of themselves as students and the ways in which they were being written.

Dash's film, then, provides an excellent example of how one might "write back." Students were encouraged to create WEB pages that pulled from a number of sources to present their own accounting of the events in question. Some of the students "borrowed" images from the University site in order to recontextualize them in an argument that questioned the circumstances leading up the riots. At the same time that they were proud

of their pages, however, students were frustrated by the lack of viable forums to voice their concerns regarding their representation on campus. In short, students are encouraged to view their own writing practices as complex processes of negotiation that account at some level for those often invisible determinants that influence production.

Importantly, these practices encourage students to consider the various subject positions they inhabit as students, employees, athletes, and parents. Dash's film generates ideas and questions from which students come to understand the ways that these various subjectivities are articulated with different technologies and are influenced by the institutional settings in which they are performed.

Conclusion

Discussing visual rhetorics is equivalent to arguing for multiple rhetorics. The primary reason for doing so is to enable students and instructors to explore the unique ways alternative discursive forms are circulated through specific institutional setting, with distinct technologies, and with alternate assumptions about what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Visual rhetorics into classroom practices, then, encourage students to explore how visual mediums attain effects in relation to non-visual rhetorics. A visual rhetoric operates in the classroom as an alternative to a rhetorical tradition that privileges writing over visual mediums. Our culture is becoming increasingly saturated by visual imagery through media such as movies, MTV, the Internet, and television. It seems only appropriate, therefore, that we as instructors engage students with textual forms that they mediate in their everyday lives. The objective here, however, is not to displace one form of rhetoric with another. It is to incorporate multiple rhetorics that

[31] Miller, *Textual Carnivals*, 142.

more adequately represent the multiple ways legitimate knowledge is debated and institutionalized through invisible logics. Ultimately, then, the use of visual rhetorics, calls attention to the need for more rhetorical scholarship on teaching practices that reflect the ways in which students engage in various settings through multiple subject position. Mahiri's claim that instructors hope to engage students by understanding "things they value" also suggests that we understand specific rhetorical questions surrounding the multiple discursive forms students negotiate daily.

Conclusion

Some Implications of Cultural Rhetorics

In an attempt to locate cultural studies in the specific context of U.S. composition and rhetoric, I have drawn on a wide range of texts that I locate at the intersections of British cultural studies and the field of rhetoric and composition in the U.S. It may seem that I have used different in readings of critical scholarship in Chapters One and Three than I have in the textual analysis of *Alias Grace* and *Daughters of the Dust*, and that the focus on postcolonial narratives is a departure from the postmarxist reading of *Alias Grace*.

Arguing in Chapter One that the counterdisciplinary focus has been eliminated from uses of cultural studies, I focused on critical analyses of scholarship at the intersections of cultural studies, rhetoric, and composition in the U.S. In Chapter Two, "Recovering British cultural studies and the Critique of the Disciplinary Subject," I then drew on theoretical works in British cultural studies through early "founding texts" of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E. P. Thompson. Through a re-reading of British cultural studies for writing instruction, I argue that it provides a framework for rethinking composition and rhetoric in the U.S. through the development of a counterdisciplinary perspective.

The need for a counterdisciplinary perspective becomes clear in the absence of critical theory in the "Tate-Lindemann debates." The debates over the uses of literature in composition, I have argued, supply a meta-history that reveals 1.) that the tendency to "read" the history of rhetoric and composition in opposition to literary criticism is often based on a "disciplinary drive" in U.S. composition and rhetoric, and 2.) that cultural

studies provides a means for thinking of a counterdisciplinary orientation to writing instruction. Ultimately, I have argued that Tony Bennett's focus on literature as an institution recommends a cultural studies approach to imaginative fiction for pedagogy. Framing the debates in binary opposition, Tate and Lindemann preclude anything but a marginal consideration of cultural studies.

The possibilities for imaginative fiction for a critical writing pedagogy through British cultural studies and rhetoric are demonstrated in a critical reading of Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*. Chapter Four focuses on a postmarxist/cultural studies approach to the text, with particular emphasis on Raymond Williams' conceptions of determination and ideology. In addition, I link cultural studies theories to a focus on a pedagogy of the institutional production of knowledge.

The focus on the production of knowledge becomes even more clear in Chapter Five's reading of Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*. Employing postcolonial theories for a cultural rhetorical reading, this chapter focuses on the relationship between three locations of the production of knowledge: the text, institutional (in terms of Hollywood as a culture industry) factors involved in the production and distribution of the film, and the institutional assumptions about knowledge that circulate in the academy (in terms of a distinction between Culturalist and Formalist assumptions about language and textuality).

In addition, Chapter Five focuses on visual rhetorics of a postcolonial film as a specific type of cultural rhetoric that extends the trajectory of British cultural studies to postcolonial criticism. The study of African American Gullahs living off the coast of South Carolina further focused critical attention on cinema as a specific type of medium from writing.

These readings of critical scholarship in the field of cultural studies and rhetoric in Chapters One through Three and on imaginative fiction in Chapters Four and Five dramatize cultural studies' multiperspective approach to reading texts. I stress this feature of cultural studies here in anticipation of the objection that the pedagogy I have described asserts, like the New Criticism it opposes, a single best reading. My description of classroom practices that draw on Dash's film, however, is not intended to assert that the instructor is the arbiter of meaning in the classroom who simply shows students how to decode a film in a way that supports a postcolonial perspective. Read in the context of other classroom texts, such as feminist readings of popular texts, my reading of *Daughters of the Dust* becomes one perspective. And while it can be argued that students will tend to imitate my reading, I have not found this to be the case. Neither have I found students reticent about critiquing my reading of the text, even as they haven't mastered concepts like subject position or ideology.

The danger of cultural rhetorics' simply supplanting New Critical tendencies, it seems to me, is primarily a matter of how the theory is integrated into the course. What is needed, therefore, are not more attempts to provide the single best or authoritative reading of *Alias Grace,* because the text itself is not really the subject of the class. The pedagogy that supports this reading encourages students to read films and novels closely and rhetorically, but as a means for understanding how cultural politics are related to the institutional production of knowledge. Thus, the focus of a writing class that is based on cultural studies helps develop multiple approaches to social-epistemic rhetoric's focus on "technology[s] for producing consciousness" (Berlin, *Rhetorics* 108-109) through a "multiplicity of formulations" including media, film, and photography (108-109).

In saying that cultural rhetorics can help facilitate resistant practices, moreover, I am not disagreeing with Sharon Crowley's assertion that writing classes function as screening mechanisms for dominant discourses. I am contending, however, with Crowley's assertion that screening is *the* function of the writing course. Composition classes serve several official and informal functions that are not reducible to screening. Even if we accept that screening is one of the writing class's primary functions, this fact would seem to recommend more practices that resist this tendency. Critical awareness of the fact that you are in a class in service of status quo will not necessarily change the reality of the course's function, but it provides some room for subversion. This is what happens in courses that frame dominant discourses like canonical literature in a discussion of other textual forms like Rap lyrics.

Cultural studies, as I have suggested in Chapters One through Three, offers a complex model of institutional power that helps understand the writing classroom in terms of multiple effects. While I have stressed this through readings of critical scholarship and pedagogy, however, I have given little attention to the important role that administration can play in helping develop oppositional cultural rhetorics. As cultural studies, through the work of Tony Bennett and others, moves more towards concerns over policy it provides a promising line of convergence with institutional scholarship on writing. In fact, the focus in Raymond Williams' work on cultural materialism would encourage institutional scholars to factor in the material implications of arguments to eliminate the writing requirement. While a focus on administration as an important place for cultural studies was beyond the scope of this study, the project does tend to recommend work in that area.

In addition to recommending more scholarly attention to administration, this dissertation invites a series of questions for further study. One area, for instance, that deserves more attention is the model of institutional power implicit in arguments about the politics of the writing classroom. The gap between the optimism of Berlin and Vivian and the extreme pessimism of Sharon Crowley, with respect to resistant practices, ought to be bridged through more attention to the multiple institutional locations that mediate power relations in our daily lives. In the usage of Berlin's "technologies of consciousness," institutions like Hollywood, the academy (or multiple academic institutions) and other forms of knowledge can be usefully explored in the writing classroom.

In suggesting this attention to institutional politics, moreover, I have stressed that I view this focus as integral to projects to help students become "better writers." Assumptions that the writing class ought to spend more time with writing skills ignore the way that what counts as knowledge is already mediated before the instructor and students enter the classroom by popular and academic assumptions about knowledge. As a result, writing practices that feature explicating different forms help students develop skills including the development of a critical perspective of language.

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