CHAPTER 2.

THIRTY YEARS AFTER *INTO THE FIELD*

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In 1987, I was flying home from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (the Cs) meeting in Atlanta and happened to sit next to Winifred Horner. I knew her son, David. We'd been undergrads together at the University of Iowa, both of us in the marching band and, later, both performing in the Old Gold Singers, a small show choir for which he played drums, and I sang and danced. We talked mostly about Dave and the sessions we'd seen in Atlanta, but I've lost any details to the residue of time.

In fact, I'd forgotten that encounter altogether until I was re-reading *Into the Field: Sites of Composition Studies*, which Anne Gere edited in 1993. In the third sentence of her introduction, Anne situates her volume in philosophical contrast to Horner's book of a decade earlier, *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap*. Rather than "bridging," in which composition borrows from other disciplines (literary studies, of course, but also psychology, linguistics, and rhetoric), Anne suggests the better metaphor is "restructuring," in which "composition shapes as much as it is shaped by other fields because questions about the nature of discourse, writing, and subjectivity emerge from mutually defining stances" (4). Curious about what Win Horner had been doing at the Atlanta Cs, I learned that she was chairing a session on "The State of the Discipline," with speakers David Chapman, Gary Tate, and Nan Johnson. One of many striking things about Anne's introduction for *Into the Field* is her confident stance that "questions about the status of composition—whether it possesses the features of a discipline, whether it merits a place in the disciplined academy—give way, in these essays, to new ways of talking about composition," rejecting a "totalizing disciplinary narrative" (3).

Concerns about the status of composition have occupied our field for the past 40 years. At one level, the motivations have been political, with desires for respect and fair material resources. Composition has been largely defined through much of its history as the activity of required first-year courses, staffed especially at larger schools by teaching assistants or adjuncts on their way to "something better." Faculty with scholarly commitments to the field resented

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how composition was dismissed as a site of scholarship deserving the staffing, status, funding, and autonomy that literary studies enjoyed. (My, how literature's times have changed.) The stakes were trenchantly and brilliantly outlined in the Composition Blues Band song, "Scorned by the MLA," set to the Springsteen tune, "Born in the USA": "In my profession now I'm just a slob / Cause I teach composition to the human mob / Scorned by the MLA / Scorned by the MLA" (Diogenes).

At another level, though, concerns about status have been motivated less by defensive positioning for academic turf than by intellectual curiosity. Given a baggy collection of epistemologies, objects of inquiry, and pedagogical practices, is composition studies actually a discipline? Or does it rather have the status of Wittgenstein's games? Just as chess, baseball, bridge, catch, and pin-the-tale-on-the-donkey have a family resemblance to one another as games, not a limited shared quality, so might composition be a federation of activities rather than a discipline, an assemblage united by family resemblance of its members. I appreciate the philosophical puzzle of disciplinary definition, smartly enacted in books like *Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity* (Malenczyk et al.). And I appreciate the strategic value of being able to articulate our identity in the higher education firmament, even though recognition as a discipline has relatively less value than it once might have had. These are days of program closures even at flagship universities, from political science to languages, from English even to mathematics. I worried a few years ago that people were unrealistic about disciplinary strength in current conditions (Hesse). My worries have accelerated.

It's both nostalgic and refreshing, then, to peer thirty years back, at the world invoked by *Into the Field*. I remember two reactions to getting my copy of the book, published the year I was tenured. The first and most immediate was that it had been published by the Modern Language Association (MLA), for some in the profession the avatar of inequality for rhetoric and composition. I understood the rancor, but by then I'd already been an MLA member nine years and will soon retire as a lifetime MLA member, so I've generally been charitable. Still, serious books in rhetoric and composition (rhet/comp) then came from publishers like the National Council of Teachers of English, Southern Illinois University Press, or Boynton/Cook, not MLA. It was a few years before composition-friendly scholar Bob Scholes would become president of MLA, and it was twenty-five years before Anne herself would be the first modern composition studies scholar elected to that role. I still remember Rosemary Feal, then MLA Executive Director, confiding in excitement to me during a hotel breakfast, that the upcoming ballot would feature Anne and Michael Bernard-Donals. Back in 1993, I figured it would do rhet/comp good to have a book with such exemplary scholars in the MLA catalog. Many of its chapters originated in convention

sessions organized by the MLA Division on Teaching Writing. The field benefitted from MLA as another publishing option; 1994 would bring another MLA book, *Writing Theory and Critical Theory* (Clifford and Schilb).

My second reaction was to the tenor of *Into the Field*. Rather than defensively wanting turf, its dozen authors were confidently doing intellectual work in a field they assumed needed no justification or borrowed status (an implication of Horner's earlier book). Unlike a fine volume roughly its contemporary, *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary*, edited by Richard Bullock and John Trimbur (in which Anne has a chapter), *Into the Field* more directly engages theory-building, in approaches alternatively philosophical and essayistic. The orientation is clear from Anne's distinction between the common usage of "field" as connoting "a bounded territory, one that can be distinguished and set apart" and her preferred less common usage, out of physics, of field as "a kind of charged space in which multiple 'sites' of interaction appear" (4). The book's work, then, was not to demand attention but to articulate ideas in the intellectually energetic space of composition.

To accomplish this work, Anne gathered a dozen prominent scholars. Here's her table of contents:

Rosemary Gates, "Creativity and Insight: Toward a Poetics of Composition"

Derek Owens, "Composition as the Voicing of Multiple Fictions"

David Bleich, "Ethnography and the Study of Literacy: Prospects for Socially Generous Research"

"Not a Conclusion: A Conversation"

The section headings, "The Philosophical Turn" and "Postmodern Subjectivities," reflect a certain historical moment. English studies in the 1980s and early 1990s were characterized by what got shorthanded as "the theory wars." Continental theorists disrupted traditional ways of reading and writing by foregrounding the economic, ideological, and political nature of texts. Textual meanings of value were constructed (and thus, amenable to deconstruction) rather than immanent or natural. In literary studies, syllabus real estate occupied by fiction and poetry gave some way to works by Lyotard, Althusser, Derrida, Jameson, Eagleton, Foucault, Kristeva, Spivak, Deleuze and Guattari, and so on. Theory wars were fought over this displacement; many people were appalled by reduced attention to the kinds of creative works that were central to English. They believed most theory dealt with interests outside or peripheral to literary studies. Most—but not all—of the fights were public and led by conservatives like Allan Bloom, whose book *The Closing of the American Mind* protested that theory disparaged Western civilization, with detriments not only for individual development but also for the larger social good.

While most English professors rejected those critiques, some others agreed with them, including a few notable compositionists who thought teaching writing was plenty complicated, important, and interesting without the larger social and political freight of theory. Maxine Hairston controversially articulated this position in her 1992 article, "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing," which warned against indoctrinating students at the expense of teaching them writing. Just as some worried that literature-based writing courses focused less on teaching writing than on teaching about literature, so others shared Hairston's view that theory-forward writing instruction eclipsed teaching writing itself.

Other compositionists at the time welcomed theory both as a point of engagement with colleagues in literature but also as an extension of rhetorical theory in, say, the tradition of Kenneth Burke. This was the atmosphere in which Anne published *Into the Field*. New theory challenged Aristotelian and formalist ideas about naturally desirable features of texts by arguing that what seemed inevitable was, in fact, a function of convention. Conventions derived from social and political power and tradition rather than from universals of language

and thought. Some writing teachers did, of course, embrace postmodernism's critique of metanarratives, often for political purposes, as happens in James Berlin and John Trimbur's *Into the Field* chapters. Less controversially, postmodern theories helped advance the idea of discourse communities, accounting for epistemological and rhetorical differences among academic disciplines.

In a wise 2018 chapter defining composition's disciplinary status, Kathi Yancey reviews several turns in composition studies over the past several decades: the social, the public, the queer, the archival, and the global, for example (15). To these, we might add the political, the multimodal, the technological, and, from *Into the Field*, the philosophical. Yancey locates these turns against a larger backdrop of five "episodes" in the discipline, starting in the 1940s and 1950s, contemporaneous with the founding of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (17). The first applied linguistics to teaching writing to new types of students; the second embraced the rise of process pedagogies and research; the third turned to cultural theory that "displaced research while underscoring the field's commitment to students and making the field look more like its literary cousins"; the fourth returned to teaching as the *field's* subject matter, informed by the three previous episodes while emphasizing students; the fifth episode celebrated disciplinarity (17–21).

In Yancey's terms, *Into the Field* exemplifies composition's theoretical episode. Many of its ideas and artifacts have morphed into a later emphasis on teaching as a subject matter, just as a glacier (or an avalanche) uses gathered rock and ice to shape new terrain. We don't much see a heavy deposit of theory per se in composition scholarship these days. The high theory of thirty years past has rather composted into the loam of contemporary composition. No serious teacher or scholar accepts that there are universally natural features of writing. None would see "good" writing as innocent of historical forces: ungendered, unclassed, unraced, in ways unproblematically achievable by all students through standard pedagogy. We assume the critique of old assumptions and focus more on applications—particularly in course design and practices like grading and assessment. We analyze specific writers or writerly identities, often to the ends of social justice. In composition studies' current phase, high theorizing has given way to more applied or empirical approaches, including to studying itself. More on that later. So it is, for example, that David Bleich's *Into the Field* chapter on ethnography seems nearly quaint, though I'm reminded how fresh these ideas were thirty years ago. Yes, Steve North had defined the qualitative tradition a few years previously, so while Bleich was hardly tilling unbroken ground, he wrote while the social turn was still being theorized.

Another residual of *Into the Field's* theory is how writing courses currently get defined. A version of cultural studies (or at least a soft version) has largely

triumphed in first-year composition (FYC), where course descriptions often foreground topics and themes. While writing about writing has strong advocates, other practices demonstrate the appeal/value/advantage of writing courses being about cultural phenomena, ostensibly through a critical lens, sometimes warranted by a prefixed "rhetoric of." So, for example, current offerings in a FYC program I know well include "Food and Culture," "Tattoos," "Horror," "Student Life and Campus Space," "Craft, DIY, and Maker Movements," and so on. These cultural studies-inflected FYC courses may not use the overtly economic lenses shaped by Berlin and Trimbur in their *Into the Field* chapters, and they may have traces without knowing it of the hermeneutical or phenomenological interests of Spellmeyer and Schildgen in theirs. But their justification for being about something can mostly stay tacit, for better or worse, because of that earlier theory. Perhaps the field might explore, in light of its attraction to thematic courses, whether FYC might cede more fully to writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) and writing-in-the-disciplines (WID).

THIRTY YEARS FORWARD

I wonder what a 2023 *Into the Field* volume might contain, imagining it had an editor as masterful as Anne Gere. I'm thinking here not of a Dick Fulkerson-like axiological analysis, nor of Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick's catalog of pedagogies, nor of Linda Adler-Kassner and Liz Wardle's distillation of threshold concepts. I'm imagining, rather, an exploration of how composition practices and needs interact with and shape other research traditions. Such a book would look vastly different from *Into the Field*, not only in topics but also in gaze. Among other things, it would have to look extensively beyond the field, at seismic changes in higher education's status and in technology's relentless ubiquity.

In February 2023, I was flying to Amsterdam, on my way to the Writing Without Borders conference in Trondheim, Norway. Sitting next to me, alas, was no one of the stature of Anne Gere, and of course Win Horner had passed a decade earlier. The window seat held the CEO of a company called Causal Design, a consulting firm for NGOs, staffed by economists and data scientists, "with a vision of making evidence-based programming affordable for NGOs, practical to field workers, and digestible to policy makers and the general public" ("Causal"). The company might analyze how, say, food distribution in Yemen or small-business stimulators in Madagascar achieve their goals. The CEO was on his way to the Middle East. When he learned I was a writing professor, he asked my opinion on generative AI, and I asked his, which was highly enthusiastic. He said that reports to clients inevitably require sections analyzing broad social, political, and economic conditions surrounding specific projects. In his experience, generative AI drafted those

sections not only more quickly but also more effectively than did recent hires from graduate programs in international studies. Drafts require editing, but they are solid enough starts. Plus, there are no egos. He also saw promise for the "tedious" work of "writing up" statistical findings into prose. I was interested to learn the evolution of a practice I'd started following in 2011, when a Chicago company called Narrative Science started offering to turn data into stories.

Clearly, any new site of composition, in the spirit of Anne's book, might involve considering how GenAI informs (or should inform) the process and status of writing, whether as invention or revision. That discussion might draw from ideas raised in the Postmodern Subjectivities section of *Into the Field*. Among several intriguing issues has been the concern that GenAI will flatten style, producing unleavened prose lacking traces of writers' lived experiences, scrubbed of their identities. In the spirit of Anne's 1993 characterization of composition studies not only as absorbing ideas from other disciplines but also as shaping them, a new chapter would insistently explore how composition studies should inflect understandings of GenAI. Certainly, our field could do so far beyond the meager lenses of plagiarism. Recently I had an undergraduate composition theory class look at a GenAI product called Sudowrite, targeted for fiction writers. Its home page promised in fall 2024 to "write a novel from start to finish. In a week" by generating "1,000s of words, **in your style**." My students could understand why people might want to have an AI do mundane, obligatory writing, but they had a harder time imagining why people wouldn't want to write their own novels. Why not have an AI just write their personal journals, while they're at it? (Actually, this is not far-fetched; some people are having ChatGPT write wedding vows.) We figured there was something about the appeal of having written or, better, "having writing attributed to me" over the act of writing itself. We connected this desire to the influencer imperative, the desire to be noted (and paid) as a content producer, the source and nature of that content being immaterial.

In any case, GenAI re-complicates subjectivity and identity in ways that would benefit from theorizing through a philosophical lens polished through composition studies, beyond the practical, educational, or economic analyses now rampant. I'd love to see a set of thinkers equal to the bunch that wrote thirty years ago address the fundamental question of how writing stands in relation to self and identity—its constitution and comportment—in the 2020s versus in the 1990s.

A second chapter might be about how composition has broadly shaped general university pedagogy. Writing classrooms were flipped decades before folks in teaching centers "discovered" the idea, Columbus-like. In fact, many teaching centers were themselves significantly shaped by WAC workshops and initiatives that started in the 1970s and accelerated through the 2000s. I speculate that a disproportionate number of people directing university centers for teaching and

learning have come from composition. (I held such a position myself at Illinois State, years back.) The concepts of teaching being student-centered and learning-centered; of active engagement; of learning as a knowledge-making activity, not simply as a knowledge-receiving one; of teachers as coaches and collaborators; of peer interaction; of teaching assistant (TA) training; of the very spirit of "across the curriculum": all these and more had roots in composition studies before being taken up in centralized teaching centers. A chapter examining composition's relationship with the pedagogical turn in higher education would trace our field's historical pedagogical lineage. Such a chapter would also theorize the implications of teaching centers taking up composition studies, as well as composition's long commitment to pedagogy being reframed by this recent enterprise. At one institution I know well, the writing program nearly twenty years ago began offering intensive professional development activities in WAC. Workshops, seminars, and research projects reached hundreds of faculty across campus. Those efforts have now been largely re-housed under the university teaching center. Writing's disciplinary expertise is incrementally effaced.

That raises a third potential area for theorizing. I'll call it composition's Status Turn or, perhaps, its Inward Turn. I mean something other than articulating recognition as a discipline. I'm pointing to how much our field has made itself, its practices and practitioners, the object of study, over students and writing. We increasingly describe issues of labor (including faculty status, teaching loads, and course sizes). We survey faculty and writing program administrator (WPA) experiences, attitudes, and practices. Requests for interviews and program/course documents or policies are pervasive. Perhaps research *about* the field is simply more visible than is research *in* the field. Perhaps this turn is magnified by current crises as higher education sinks under tuition costs and public skepticism about its value and values. To be fair, the ninety composition studies books published in 2023 (Lockridge) reflect more projects about writing and writers than about status and institutional formations. But the general trend is toward the empirical, whether quantitative or qualitative, rather than the theoretical or historical. Perhaps the latter epistemologies were more attractive to an earlier generation of scholars formed substantially out of literary study, the generation of *Into the Field*. A chapter in an imagined new volume would theorize how the educations and circumstances of current scholars versus their ancestors have shaped attention and practices.

NEGLECTED, NOT LOST

In 2023, Deborah Holdstein edited an anthology published by the MLA, *Lost Texts in Rhetoric and Composition*, in which several authors discuss articles or books in the field that have fairly disappeared from current interest but merit

renewed attention. Anne Gere wrote a chapter as did, from the 1993 collection, Kurt Spellmeyer. (I'll disclose that I did, too.)

Every discipline continually sorts and resifts its history. There's a strong imperative to focus on the recent, to keep the cutting edge sharp. Earlier publications and ideas get namechecked or summarized in a few sentences that perhaps send readers back to earlier sources but more likely have them quickly nod in recognition. Composition studies is not yet to the point of the sciences and social sciences, where a summative single sentence often spawns a parenthetical list of a dozen or more citations, gestured by author and date. Our field still values paraphrase and summary, but with 90 books published a year, plus hundreds of articles, decisions are made.

Steve North's dictum may still be true: nothing disappears from the house of lore (27). But that doesn't mean everyone knows how it got there or how to find it. *Into the Field: Sites of Composition Studies* remains important as a reminder of where foundational theories in our field came from and, importantly, of the contexts in which they were generated, a time of high theory and of high confidence, as composition studies could assume its status and get on with exploring heady ideas. Individually and collectively, we may feel the subconscious tug to Marie Kondo-ize our professional bookshelves and memories. The task is made easier by not re-reading a book when you pull it off the shelf to ask, "Does it give you pleasure?" The question for *Into the Field* gets answered yes, as does the question, "Does it make you think?" The lucky thing about books is that you needn't rely on a chance airplane seat assignment to encounter Anne Gere's profound ideas and generous contributions, still decades after.

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CHAPTER 3.

RESCUING READING: CENTERING REAL READERS

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In 2012, Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori and Patricia Donahue published a much-cited analysis of the dramatic "disappearance" of the topic of reading from the composition-rhetoric scholarship of the previous two decades ("What is College English"). Reading, to be sure, has always been central to college writing instruction. What struck these researchers was the waning of reading as a subject of study—especially notable for a field increasingly devoted to inclusively ecological views of student literacy development.

In this chapter, I reconsider the intellectual-institutional habits that, over the last thirty years, have kept the study of reading relegated to this marginal status. Since 2012, scholars have made important strides in starting to better "secure," in Ellen Carillo's terms, "a place for reading" in both the composition classroom and writing support more generally (*Securing a Place*). Yet for all this renewed attention, much of this college reading scholarship continues to hew to a narrowly corrective agenda, one prescriptive rather than descriptive, set only on fixing students' purported reading ills, rather than investigating and revealing more capaciously all that reading is. Writing research assiduously attends to the varied and often still emergent aims, technologies, and social forces that shape the messy work of students' (and, indeed, all writers') textual productions. The reading scholarship, by contrast, remains bound to an essentially remedial framework, upheld by a persistent scholarly neglect of the diverse complexities of the real student reader. Drawing on Anne Ruggles Gere's longstanding commitment to surfacing the agentive power of literacy practices and perspectives traditionally overlooked by the academy, I ask how attention to these real readers—and the more inclusive conceptions of reading this can engender—might rescue reading from the deficit narratives that keep it so stubbornly consigned to the margins of our field.

DOES THE STUDY OF READING BELONG IN WRITING STUDIES?

A number of cases can be made for increased attention to reading in the context

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of higher education. Reading, like writing, is undeniably central to most academic and professional pursuits, not to mention our personal lives. Whether through phones, laptops, Kindles, books, intake forms, menus, or highway billboards, to maintain communication with others in most contemporary spaces is to be awash in running tickertapes of written language.

Reading research, moreover, has long shown that the ability to read effectively does not constitute a one-and-done skill. Especially in the case of the specialized reading tasks of academia, most professions, and civic life, one's ability to make sense of one or another given text in ways that are useful and/or context-appropriate will require of the reader a wide range of processes, knowledge sets, and presuppositions. As Sam Wineburg illustrates in his 1991 study of professional historians' reading of historical artifacts, different forms of reading each entail a "distinctive epistemological stance" (495); for the historians he studies, this includes not only attention to a text's possible "subtexts," but an even more fundamental "belie[f] that [such subtexts] exist" (510). Comparing this historical mode to other forms of reading pushes these distinctions even more into relief. Making sense of an instructional manual requires a very different approach—different knowledge, different kinds of attention, and different beliefs about what texts can tell—than the mode Wineburg describes; as does skimming one's personal newsfeed for updates to some unfolding event; as does critically evaluating an op-ed's nested set of claims. Navigating such tasks and texts, as one needs to in new communities of practice, thus entails what David Jolliffe calls a "continuing education" in new reading processes, presumptions, and attentional resources ("Review Essay").

Yet research also shows that neither college students nor faculty tend to understand the act of reading in these complex ways. Daniel Keller's ethnography of U.S. high school readers demonstrates that, while these students' everyday reading practices were quite rich, school had provided them few metacognitive frameworks with which they might recognize, much less describe and develop, these varied kinds of reading. These students, instead, conceived of reading as a single endeavor, whose demands were intensely felt if little understood: for them, per Keller's description, "Reading was simply reading, and [they] were asked to do a lot of it" (77). Many higher education contexts only further reinscribe such thin conceptions. As Howard Tinberg argues, most college instructors eschew explicit reading instruction, considering it "someone else's business" (247), thus, a number of writing scholars' persistent complaints about the field's striking absence of reading research and pedagogies (e.g. Jolliffe, "Review Essay" and "'Learning to Read'"; Adler-Kassner and Estrem; Horning et al.; Carillo, *Securing a Place*; Del Principe and Ihara; Ihara and Del Principe).

It is hardly surprising, then, that two decades of empirical research also confirm the extent to which students' reading practices little align with higher education's curricular expectations. Studies show that students' reading of course materials is, contrary to many instructors' injunctions, often cursory (e.g. Hoeft); and that few undergraduates recognize the cursory nature of their engagements (e.g. Howard et al.). Few students display much metacognitive knowledge about learning or themselves as learners (Keller; Pintrich) or acknowledge many connections between their engagement with assigned readings and course success (Gorzycki et al.; Del Principe and Ihara).

In many ways, the field has begun to attend more rigorously to these needs. The same year (2012) Salvatori and Donahue published their analysis ("What is College English"), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) launched a special interest group devoted to the role of reading in composition, and in 2021 the organization published an official position statement ("CCCC Position Statement"). In 2014, Carillo made her influential case for a "mindful reading" paradigm (*Securing a Place*) and in 2017 released a textbook on the topic (*A Writer's Guide*). A 2016 special issue of *Pedagogy* edited by Salvatori and Donahue and several edited collections (e.g. Sullivan et al.; Horning et al.) confirm a rising interest in improving college-level reading-writing theory and instruction. In other ways, however, reading remains a footnote to the field's overall project. Adler-Kassner and Estrem note the absence of reading theory and pedagogy in doctoral-level courses on composition theory and teaching preparation (36). The CCCC's 2021 position statement puts it even more pointedly: that "outside of community colleges," there persists a lack of "sustained attention to reading as the counterpart of writing in the construction and negotiation of meaning." Yet perhaps the clearest sign of this continued neglect is the fact that the field's touchstones of reading research and theory—say, Christina Haas and Linda Flower's "Rhetorical Reading Strategies and the Construction of Meaning," or Charles Bazerman's "Physicists Reading Physics" and "A Relationship between Reading and Writing"—were produced over thirty years ago. That the conditions of reading have since changed so radically—especially regarding the digital platforms on which many of us now read—only makes this time gap all the more glaring.

RECONSIDERING "NEGLECT" AND ITS REMEDIES

For many historians of the field, this neglect results from a thirty-year bias against the topic itself, now baked into the field's disciplinary identity. By Carillo's account, the field's marginalization of reading can be traced to its increased dissociation from literary-cultural studies, that subfield of English studies where the explicit

study of reading has long been presumed to live (*Securing a Place*).[1] During the 1970s and 1980s, to be sure, literary/composition/rhetoric/critical theory scholars ushered into the composition-rhetoric scholarship (as it was then known) a brief flowering of reading-writing theory and pedagogies (think the previously cited Haas and Flower and Bazerman, as well as Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Ann Berthoff, and David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky). At the same time, however, the field was working to establish itself as an independent discipline, with its own doctoral programs and tenure-track positions, prompting comp-rhet scholars to more stringently distinguish their own methods and goals from those espoused by literary studies, the field to which, in many English departments, comp-rhet had long been considered subordinate because merely preparatory. What Salvatori and Donahue call composition-rhetoric's "separatist project" ("What is College English" 201)—the understandable effort to disaggregate investigations of literacy from investigations of the literary—thus also enabled a disaggregation of reading and writing, with the implication that these activities could in fact be dissociated as each belonging to entirely separable programs of study.

For most writing scholars, then, reading quickly lost its status as viable topic of disciplinary inquiry (and even, to many, became disciplinarily suspect—a seemingly retrograde attempt to smuggle back into writing studies the very literary critical concerns from which comp-rhet was so keen to distance itself). By this "great divorce" narrative (Carillo, *Securing a Place* 76), the field's neglect of reading can be understood as a form of collateral damage—damage that, moreover, can be remedied by a mere return of attention to the topic. Indeed, it is the quantity of attention that writing scholars granted to reading that Salvatori and Donahue's analysis uses as its metric for measuring the topic's "neglect" and "revival": specifically, the changing number of reading-related "program categories" offered in CCC's annual calls for papers (which, for much of the 2000s, dropped to zero) ("What is College English" 213, 210).

Yet to focus on this metric alone risks simplifying both the problem and its potential solution. Attending only to changing quantities of reading scholarship—as the C's position statement also does—is to overlook another important feature at play: this scholarship's qualitative nature, including its prevailing aims, methods, presumptions, and blind spots. This observation is not to devalue the reading scholarship as it currently stands; nor to suggest there are no exceptions (e.g. Keller) to the broader trends I here identify. It is, instead, to prompt a recalibration of how we understand the field's widespread "neglect" of reading

1 U.S.-U.K. literary studies arguably took its contemporary form when scholars of the early twentieth century expanded their investigations of literary artifacts to include the forms of reading purportedly required for critical engagement with such artifacts (e.g. Richards; Ransom; Brooks and Warren).

and to ask whether this neglect can indeed be rectified by a current influx of scholarship that mainly functions as a collection of handbook-like injunctions, each applicable only to its own pedagogical context. I thus propose that this scholarship, while in some cases necessary, is still not sufficient for the kind of comprehensive, research-based theory building that would truly "secure" the study of reading, and the reading-writing connection, as fundamental to the study of writing.

Like usage handbooks, of course, the field's current reading injunctions offer crucial support to students working towards specific, predetermined expectations and learning outcomes. Whether aimed at improving readers' open-minded engagement with long-form prose (Sullivan et al.'s "deep reading"), developing rhetorical awareness (e.g. Bean), learning from models (e.g. Bunn) or confirming claims' credibility (e.g. Wineburg and McGrew), current work on college reading-writing provides students with a valuable array of situation-specific strategies. Newer work on digital literacies further taxonomizes the varied approaches beneficial for careful engagement with texts on screens and online (e.g. Cohn; Baron). Yet also like usage handbooks, this reading research—to borrow Jolliffe's astute observation—has "tended more toward the applied and pedagogical than toward the conceptual and theoretical" ("'Learning to Read'" 13). I would go even further. As pure applied pedagogy, such scholarship is also limited by its pervasively corrective aims.

Here the lens of linguistic or grammatical prescriptivism proves useful. As Sidney Greenbaum explains, "[P]rescriptive grammar evaluates and advises" (22), providing guidelines for what one or another grammar expert—say, Bryan Garner, or Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers—considers proper and improper uses of language. I argue the current reading scholarship functions in much the same way. Its aims are directive: to advise how students should read. Methodologically, it tends to draw only from anecdotal or hypothetical-aspirational examples. Because primarily prescriptive, it also frequently leaves its own biases unchecked, presuming its one way of reading ("slow," "deep," "rhetorical," et cetera) to function as the best and only standard. Of course, as linguist Deborah Cameron has argued, a prescriptive agenda can be considered an understandable, even inevitable, form of "hygiene" among members of a community. As Cameron argues, this "urge to improve or 'clean up'" (1) is "part of what language-using is all about" (2).

Yet—as with studies of language use—to reduce our study of reading *only* to the prescriptive is to default to a purely remedial model for how reading is best learned, studied, and reflectively understood. After all, a purely prescriptivist framework tends to position varietal preferences as universal truths and to view those unschooled in these varietal preferences not through the lens of difference, but deficit.

Here, too, the institutional-intellectual history of writing studies offers guidance. College writing research and pedagogy have long been saddled with the institutional mandate of remediating literacy skills that, it is widely presumed, students should already have in hand when they arrive in college. Such a deficit paradigm orients pedagogies around backward-looking correction and resolutely not around forward-looking introduction to, and education in, sets of field-specific knowledge that students could not possibly arrive in college having already learned. As Downs and Wardle have argued, this remedial strain in writing instruction thus rests on a fundamental "misconception" of what college-level literacy knowledge and learning entail, reducing literacy to portable skills, and upholding the presumption—now well debunked (e.g. Anson and Moore)—that such skills, once learned, will transfer wholesale to new contexts. By encouraging this acontextual universalism, this misconception further masks the situation-specific values and behaviors that actually shape all literacy practices and expectations. As Brian Street famously argued, such an "autonomous" view of literacy—as one monolithic skillset learners can apply successfully across all contexts—is a view blinkered by a failure to cop to its own "ideologies," and by an illusory conviction that its particular ways of reading and writing are the only ways to properly communicate (19-38).

For writing studies, it was only by breaking free—or, at the least, by looking more critically upon—these institutional-intellectual habits that the field was able to come fully into its own. Crucial to this evolution was a new refusal to leave unquestioned the very crisis narratives and subsequently universalized fix-it prescriptions that justified the institutionally superimposed mandates by which the field had long been reductively defined. To be sure, alternate theorizations of what it means to study and teach writing and rhetoric can be glimpsed as far back as the turn of the last century, in the work, say, of Fred Newton Scott or Gertrude Buck (as examined by Bordelon); the history of composition instruction is more complex than some disciplinary histories have claimed (see also Gere, "Presidential Address"; Carter and Durst).

Nonetheless, a more comprehensive paradigm shift did not arrive until scholars were able to name and turn explicitly against the mechanistic, acontextual constructs of literacy that long defined "first year comp." Thanks to this social turn, composition-rhetoric expanded from a merely preparatory teaching subject, so-called, to a broadly inclusive, critically informed, research-based "human science," to use Phelps' crucial term (76-77). This evolution entailed a reformation of what writing might mean in and for higher education. No longer only an "activity" requiring the remediations of first-year composition, writing became newly positioned as a complex and far-reaching "subject of study," as Adler-Kassner and Wardle have put it (4).

Also important is how this recalibration was substantiated and enabled by the new methodologies the field came to embrace. As writing scholars grew skeptical of literacy constructs and pedagogies based purely on anecdote and aspiration, research became more empirical, examining not only the diverse expectations writers face, but the real practices, processes, sponsors, and forces that enable and constrain writing. Researchers took up new units of analysis, by which they could challenge longstanding presumptions about the purportedly universal textual and rhetorical features once considered the sole source of writerly efficacy and by which they could attend instead to the diverse human behaviors, contexts, and values whereby texts are produced, circulated, and granted culturally sanctioned meanings and approval. In short, these new methods—ethnographic, qualitative, situation-sensitive—allowed writing scholarship to adopt a newly descriptive approach to the study and teaching of writing. And a newly ecological view of writing emerged, one rejecting prior idealizations of writing and focused instead on a methodologically rigorous research agenda: delineating what real writers, in real communities of practice, actually make when they write, and how.

The field's approach to reading would do well to heed the lessons of this field-history, and especially to its self-scrutinizing revising of its own goals, methods, and disciplinary identity. Compared to writing, reading is, of course, famously difficult to study—it is by definition an act whose traces are elusive and subjective, as much felt as they are thought, so interior are they to an individual's situated, embodied experience. This should not suggest, however, that empirical investigations are impossible. In the early throes of the field's ambitious reinvention of the study of writing, the study of reading seemed poised to keep pace, especially through methodologically innovative inquiries into varied readers' acts of meaning making for specific contexts. Yet this promise faded fast, as much, I argue, due to anxiety over disciplinary boundaries as to a growing skepticism about the very methods (soon maligned as a crude "cognitivism") that make empirical study of reading possible in the first place.

Indeed, one great irony of the reading scholarship is that the more the field embraced its current context-sensitive, ecological paradigm, the less reading itself appeared a disciplinarily appropriate subject of study. Or, put another way, the more reading was confined to its current auxiliary position, as a subject relevant only for classroom-specific remediation. What resulted—albeit tacitly—was that reading was rebranded as a purely pedagogical issue. The "neglect" of reading does not constitute, then, a general failure of interest or attention. It constitutes instead a specific failure to apply to reading the same descriptivist research agenda that has so successfully reshaped the study of writing.

CENTERING REAL READERS IN EXPANDED SITES OF READING

The remediational agenda driving most of the reading-focused writing scholarship has in some ways become so naturalized to writing studies that it can be difficult to imagine alternatives. The US is—and has long been—saturated with literacy crisis narratives, never more so than in our current age, whose practices are so dramatically shaped by the ever-changing digital systems that mediate so many of our textual engagements. But alternatives to remediation and prescriptivism exist. Moreover, these alternatives must—pedagogically and empirically—be embraced in writing studies' reading and reading-writing scholarship.

Salvatori and Donahue rightly observe that some of the most insightful reading-writing scholarship of earlier decades emerged from a then-new focus on the real student reader ("What is College English"). But that research was also enabled by a devotion to empirical study, resisting the field's longstanding mandate to put the pedagogical cart before the horse. The aim of this then-new reading scholarship was not merely to "fix" reading by prescribing better ways of reading, a goal requiring scholars only to delineate idealized guidelines for what they'd like readers to do. The aim of such research instead was to explore, in real scenarios, how the meaning making that reading enables actually gets accomplished—this through a focus on what real readers do, regardless of a scholar's own personal preference about how reading ought to be carried out.

Yet writing studies provides another lesson, showing how understandings of literacy are also limited by overly narrow conceptions of the very sites in which literacy takes place and from which our study of literacy can continue to learn. Reading scholarship, I thus argue, should return its focus not just to real student readers but also to the many diverse contexts in which these readers read and make meanings that matter—and not only to us, but to them. In her crucial "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition," Anne Ruggles Gere exhorted her field to reconsider its habitually exclusive focus on writing that takes place "inside classroom walls," and to attend more inclusively, more empirically, and, indeed, more empathetically, to writing taking place at many other value-laden sites of meaning construction (78). Only through such investigation, Gere argues, can scholars begin to dismantle the field's longstanding "gatekeeping function" (89). The same "extracurricular" investigations would substantially deepen our own—and our students'—understanding of reading and the reading-writing connection.

Of course, examining what real student readers do outside the classroom forces uncomfortable questions. Such study would prod us to reconsider

whether certain reading practices and aims are really as universally applicable as we might assume and whether our expressed reading values are driven more by wishful thinking or nostalgia than by the realities of most readers' experiences and goals (including our own). Pointing to one such unchecked piety, Doug Downs notes the field's continuing "resistance to screen literacies" (206), despite the reality that digital reading is now most readers' "default" rather than the exception. I would build on Downs' observation to argue that such resistance is only enabled by a body of reading scholarship focused almost exclusively on the controlled context of the college classroom, where such realities can be blithely recommended against, if not outright ignored, and where students are often positioned only as learners whose reading behaviors and conceptions require nothing more than our well-intentioned realignments.

For reading-writing scholars, a central question then remains about what exactly it means in the context of writing studies to teach and study reading. If by teaching and studying reading we mean teaching and theorizing only how readers ought to read, in order to more effectively reach one or another predetermined outcome, our scholarship has made some important strides. If, however—and following the example of writing scholarship—by teaching and studying reading we mean teaching, exploring, and theorizing what reading more fundamentally *is,* across contexts and conditions, the field falls short. The former is most properly understood as a prescriptive project, delineating one or another form of "good reading" that scholars have found useful for meeting specific ends. The latter, by contrast, is an empirical, descriptivist project—exploring and teaching an ontology of reading, and asking, essentially, how reading works, both in and across contexts, and what this study can teach us, as scholars (as much as it can teach our students), about our own ideological and pedagogical presuppositions.

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