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The Teaching of Teaching: Theoretical Reflections

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> You know and I know that all that stuff is crap. Nothing is really known about how to teach well; the most that could be known would be how to make students like the class and the professor and thus believe, probably erroneously, that they have been taught something worth learning.
>
> A winner of the Quantrell Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, quoted in Wayne C. Booth, *The Vocation of a Teacher,* p. 209.
>
> I want to do everything I can to persuade teachers, K-35, to become philosophers—to remind them that that is, indeed, what they are when they consider language and thought, theory and practice, intending and realizing, writing and rewriting; when they think about thinking or consider the meanings of meaning; when, in Coleridge's wonderful phrase, they seek to know their knowledge.
>
> Ann E. Berthoff, *The Making of Meaning*, p. v.

An intractable ambivalence about the nature, the function, and the worth of teaching pervades our profession. It is systemic. It is

ubiquitous. And it is dysfunctional. Seldom brought fully into the light of critical argument, it surreptitiously emerges, hydra-like, in sites and circumstances where it is often expedient or strategic to overlook it.[1] And so it remains elusively and treacherously present, permeating the broad matrices that regulate our ability to achieve status and privilege in our disciplinary communities, shaping our professional identities in ways far beyond our capacity as individuals either to avoid or to surmount. It can be said of this ambivalence what Maurice Blanchot says of "opinion:"

> [It] settles and decides by way of a speech that does not decide and that does not speak. It is tyrannical because no one imposes it, no one is accountable for it. The fact that there is no answering for it (not because no guarantor is to be found, but because it asks only to be spread, not affirmed or even expressed) is what constitutes it as a question never brought to light. (19)

The work necessary to investigate the many institutional and disciplinary mechanisms that produce this ambivalence, spread it, and keep it under cover, far exceeds the scope of this essay. We think of that work as a collective project, one that needs the contribution of different disciplines and approaches.Our aim here is to direct that investigation toward a site that, although accessible (either by its presence or its absence) to many of us in departments of English, has not been granted sufficient status as a topic of scholarly research.[2] (Although our argument is valid for other disciplines, we limit ourselves here to departments of English.) To be specific, we want to analyze several manifestations and consequences of this ambivalence, as they "appear" (seem, come into play) in, and affect, a particular context—the Teaching of Teaching Seminar—which we have taught in and for our department, together and with others, about a dozen times. For us, no other context has more dramatically delineated the reasons for the ambivalence that concerns us and the tensions it produces. By the same token, no other context has as productively and appropriately made them accessible to critical scrutiny.

What follows is a composite (gleaned from several seminars),

partial (in both senses of the word), discontinuous description of how we tried to teach teaching in that arena, struggling at every step against and with a web of institutional, theoretical, ideological, and practical constraints that make the work of such a course always unpredictable, different from what any of its participants, including its teachers, expect, hope, desire, plan it to be. Although this description is based on *our* experience, we are mostly interested in bringing to light and fostering reflection on a range of local and more broadly general forces that, already in place, already in movement, always preceded (as a set of formative terms and processes), followed from (as an array of ideologically marked effects), subtended, and ultimately *constructed* the work we tried to do in such powerful and unexpected ways.

The Teaching Seminar: Its Design, Methodology, Subject Matter

In our department, the Teaching of Teaching Seminar is required of first term teaching assistants/fellows, offered in composition, and structured to prepare/assist the new TA/TFs to meet their obligation to teach, in the same term, an entry level course in reading and writing. The project of the seminar, then, is vexed from the outset by a complex and intersecting array of contrary forces, "local" as well as more generally "cultural—" forces that inevitably impinge upon and predetermine how we and all the participants understand and value its work. Consider for example how the approach to the teaching of composition that our program "stands for" may be accepted or contested in light of the participants' position on the long-standing theoretical and curricular separation, and more recent (if still uneasy) rapprochement between reading and writing as disciplinary activities. [See the Lindemann/Tate revival of that debate in *College English*, March 1993, March 1995.] Consider how, given the course's specific location, its "required" nature may be interpreted in light of the participants' programmatic affiliations. Consider how our status, as its teachers, may be assessed in terms of the presumed, if not consciously drawn, distinctions between the preparation and scholarship necessary to teach within different programs (composition, lit-

erature, creative writing, film, cultural studies); or in terms of the academic differentiation of teaching from research, a differentiation that constructs our position(s) at every turn, pre-determining the ways in which all of our work, but especially the work for and of this course, is understood and valued.[3] And consider finally how the disjunctions and the tensions inevitably produced by the participants' competing assumptions, different theoretical positions, diverse expectations, both amplify and are amplified by the strategic fictions the discipline of English Studies has deployed to represent the teaching of teaching as either eminently theoretical (hence justifiably unconcerned with practice) or essentially instinctive (hence fundamentally unteachable by customary academic methods.)[4]

Because we wanted to expose the locations and the mechanisms of these tensions, and to connect them to the issue of graduate instruction in composition, we designed our seminar as a place to question their formation, systematically, in a reflexive way. What we had in mind was more than the occasional move to "read" the teaching practices of our course—i.e., making it the object of various kinds of internal evaluation and/or critique. We wanted to bring to the table, put on the table, recuperate, whenever possible, the kinds of questions that may remain tacit in other courses, but that we thought in a seminar of this kind should be what the course is and is about, both its methodology and its subject matter.

As we mentioned, this seminar is required for all teaching assistants/fellows during their first year of funding. The requirement represents in our view an act of intellectual integrity and professional responsibility on the part of our department toward the graduate students it supports and the undergraduate students they are employed to teach. By the same token, the interplay of the intellectual and economic aspects of a graduate student's academic experience impacts the project of the seminar in far-reaching and unpredictable ways: framing everyone's work is, for example, the awareness that, to be re-appointed and re-funded, graduate students must "pass" the course. In addition, they must also perform "satisfactorily" as teachers in their own classrooms.[5] The anxiety that arises from the conjunction of what our profession has constructed as incommensurable kinds of academic work is considerable. (Even in our department, the separate evaluation of the work graduate students do in the seminar from what they do in the undergraduate classroom unwittingly reinforces that perceived incommensurability.) To complicate matters, that anxiety is compounded in our case by the fact that the course the new graduate students teach contravenes many of the assumptions and expectations they bring with them about the teaching of composition. Called "General Writing," our freshman composition course uses as its central text David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers.* The most distinctive characteristic of this text and the course it engenders is its sustained focus on reading and its reflexive interrogation of reading theories and practices as a means for conceptualizing what writing in the university is and is for. The process of teaching this course for the first time can seem disorienting, almost counter-instinctual, particularly because the reflexive interrogation we advocate is neither "natural" nor generalizable. Most of our graduate students, then, find themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to teach the twenty two undergraduates in their classes to work with reading and writing in a theoretical framework that they themselves are simultaneously learning how to feel (un)comfortable with.[6]

To initiate and to sustain this learning process, at both of the applicable sites, we seek to make explicit, at the outset, the theoretical assumptions and the practical consequences of the approach our program has chosen, which is negotiable in some respects at the level of detail but not in the broad outlines of its method. Much of the work we do, especially early in the semester, involves turning the discourse of the seminar back on itself, reflecting on the implications of everybody's questions and statements. We construct, and call attention to, class discussion as an analogue of the method of inquiry the writing assignments are presumed to foster. But what for us is an earnest attempt to be theoretically coherent in our work, without reducing the teaching of teaching to a repertoire of tips and guidelines, is often perceived as an evasion in that we seem to be presupposing mastery of a "canon" that, in certain respects, our approach was originally designed to counter, or to be insisting that certain aspects of teaching composition are quite problematic when they actually are not.[7] The first weeks of the seminar are shot through

with anomalies of this sort, and while in our view they are inevitable and facilitative of our project, the tensions they create and the occasional arguments they provoke can be disturbing for the parties involved.

To complicate matters, those tensions stem from a variety of markedly different cultural/theoretical positions on writing and reading and what it takes to teach them. Typically the group (averaging about twenty two students) will include (in proportions that vary drastically from year to year) just-graduated MA and MFA students; PhD students coming from a wide variety of MA programs, including our own; and older returning students—some in creative writing, often with publishing records in their chosen genre, and some in literature or composition, often with prior professional or teaching experience. One of the inevitable challenges that arises from this diversity is getting the various groups and individuals to talk and listen to one another, and relatedly to perceive and to reflect on the cultural constructedness of our various positions.[8]

A dialogue of this sort is difficult to sustain, in part at least because its momentum is often resisted by the program-specific discourses that are most immediately available when we try to talk cross-programmatically about teaching. Even basic terms like "workshop approach" can mean quite different things depending on one's programmatic orientation, not only in terms of practice but also in terms of the much more powerful tacit assumptions about what writing is, how it gets done, and what it is for. In so far as these discursive forms are neither individualistic nor idiosyncratic, in so far as they reflect some version of the intellectual orientations that produce and uphold them rather than some personal bias or preference, they have offered us important opportunities to investigate how the differences that establish and maintain programmatic divisions get to be defined and sustained. The two we are most accustomed to, given the specific structure(s) and division(s) of our department, derive from what, in the lingo of the seminar, have been called—with valences and intensities that vary from year to year—"creative writing" and "critical theory." Although these positions are obviously embraced and lived, often with great passion, by individuals in the seminar, we try to depersonalize them so that we can begin to read them as reinscriptions

of discourses and traditions that circulate so pervasively among us as to seem both natural and inevitable. Despite the many and obvious differences between the ways these two groups tend to think and talk about their own writing and reading and the writing and reading they want to call upon their students to do, they share an initial skepticism of the self-reflexive habits of mind we are working so hard to establish. In the next section we try to describe some of the modalities of this skepticism and to conjecture about its theoretical motivations.

Two Theoretical Resistances to "Seeking to Know One's Knowledge"

When the "writers"—a term that in our department is used for poets, novelists, journalists, etc.—have reservations about this goal of the seminar's project, it is often in the name of a "creativity" that is constructed as (both being and needing to remain) beyond such inquisition. Though the rubric of "creativity" is deployed specifically in relation to the production of certain kinds of texts, it colors as well the sense in which such texts are to be interpreted and/or appreciated. As we discuss in the seminar the need to find ways of describing what happens when we read, how it is that we tend to construct one and not another response to a text, the writers will often feel much less comfortable with the second line of inquiry than they do with the first. They recollect, lyrically and persuasively, scenes of instruction within which—as children or adolescents—they learned on their own to read certain kinds of highly valued texts. In response to questions about the context that favored their autodidacticism, some will describe households replete with books and talk about books, a kind of oasis of family discourse that "naturally" fostered a love of reading and writing. Others will describe settings that are exactly the opposite, within which they performed a sort of heroic, individually willed—and therefore "natural" in quite a different sense—form of self-education. These stories tend to complicate the question of "cultivation" in compelling ways, often by setting up an internal opposition between "public" (i.e. school) and "private" (e.g. home) kinds of learning and literacy. Our aim in inviting reflection on these students' ways of thinking and talking about reading is not, obviously,

to discredit their accounts (though our scrutiny has sometimes proved to be discomfiting to some.) We are more concerned with examining the *consequences* of carrying this narrative uncritically into a classroom that is populated mostly and most often by students who do not imagine themselves as "readers" and, conversely, as "writers" in quite this sense: What might happen when these teachers' students show little cultural, emotional, and intellectual predisposition for writing and reading? How do teachers teach these students what they themselves learned to perform "naturally"—i.e, without an accompanying awareness of the means by which this learning was accomplished—outside the classroom? A pedagogy that insists on innate passion and imagination as *prerequisites* for "writing" can, we believe, become simply exclusionary and, ultimately, ineffectual. Teaching in an urban university in a major industrial city, teaching students with remarkably different backgrounds and dispositions, we have grown increasingly chary of conceptualizations of writing that attribute its production to acts of inspiration—divine or secular—and concomitant conceptualizations of reading as acts of divination that draw otherwise hermetic meanings out of a text. We do not want to deny that such acts do indeed occur. But we do think it is our responsibility to raise questions like: In so far as "inspiration" and "divination" cannot be taught, in so far as they are constructed as markers of exceptionality, what are the implications about whom and what a teacher is left to teach in a composition course? How do these implications construct the role and the function of the teacher? How and why are these implications so carefully covered over that it is difficult to discuss and to reflect on them? Who benefits from their not being articulated?[9]

An equally complex response to the work of the seminar arises on the other side of the contrast between creativity and criticism. This response tends to construct the seminar, and many of its participants, as nostalgic, suspiciously humanistic, in that we seem to be fostering the illusion of independent, self-relying subjectivities in our discussions of the students in, and materials for, the undergraduate composition classrooms. Those among our students who have earned a facility with the sanctioned disciplinary discourses tend to feel more comfortable challenging the project of the seminar, often

in the name of a critical theory that is constructed as (again, both being and needing to remain) beyond our inquisition. Thus, the discourse that provides for the critique of the seminar is posited as outside of the terms of the seminar's project. The authority of this position tends to be reinforced by the two primary "topics" of the seminar: composition and teaching, neither of which carries high status markers in the currency of the research university. Again, our goal is not to devalue the efforts that have gone into the production of such a position, but to foreground some of the ways in which it may lead to approaches to teaching that are, though in a different sort of way, equally exclusionary and potentially ineffectual. And so, in this case, we raise questions like: What happens when students show little inclination toward or facility for cultural critique? What is it, then, that a critically sophisticated teacher has to teach? At what point does a method get reduced, either by teacher or students, to a set of seemingly coerced positions? At what point does cultural criticism become, in practice, merely another series of proffered techniques—like those, for example, that are required to produce a five paragraph theme or a comparison/contrast essay—that students learn by rote to mimic and that, as a consequence, allow them to remain similarly "outside" of, unaltered by, the work of their courses?

As our description indicates, while one group of the seminar's participants may be positioning us as inimical insiders, another group may be positioning us as inimical outsiders. We have found and can offer no certain path around this formidable dilemma. Our response has been to learn to see this double dissociation not as a problem to be overcome but as a liberating mechanism, one that has allowed us to serve as reflexes for, rather than the arbiters of, the discourse of the group, to steer conversations out from differences rooted in texts—as pre-constituted discourses—that are not (yet) commonly shared and toward differences rooted in the texts that we are all in the process of learning to read and to teach daily: the texts of our undergraduate classrooms.

This way of talking about the classroom—as a text, that is—has become almost a commonplace over the last decade or so. The process of working out in theoretical and practical detail what it means for a teacher of writing and reading to think in such a way is, though,

neither easy nor easy to agree upon. We begin our approach to this problem at the most obvious point of transaction: to name the classroom as a text to be read and taught is to make the reading and teaching of that text eligible for the same critical interrogations with which we engage literary and theoretical texts. Another way of putting the same principle is that a theory of reading written texts, as a set of interpretive practices, can be seen as presuming or prefiguring a consonant pedagogical system for reading the text of the social relationships in the classroom; conversely, a theory of teaching enacts a method of interpreting the transactions of the classroom that can be translated into a more general theory of reading. This equation offers us a discursive framework within which the work of the seminar calls into question, quite powerfully we believe, the customary gap that divides teaching from research/scholarship. But above all, it offers us ways of questioning and assessing the worth of theories of reading in terms of the kind and the extent of learning that their enactments in the classroom make possible.

A "*Typical*" Syllabus

One of the means by which we try to achieve our goals in this course is the wide range of non-canonical materials that might end up on our list of "required texts," books as ideologically diverse as I.A.Richards's *Practical Criticism* and Roland Barthes's *The Death of the Author,* as historically diverse as Plato's *Pheadrus* and Michel Foucault's *What Is an Author?*, as far outside the umbrella of composition as Joseph Moxley's *Creative Writing in America* or John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction,* as far under that umbrella as William Coles/James Vopat's *What Makes Writing Good* or McCrimmon's *Writing with a Purpose,* as seemingly germane to teaching English as Robert Scholes' *Textual Power,* or as seemingly irrelevant to it as Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler.* And side-by-side with these—as sites where theory and practice can most dramatically speak to, confront, and expose each other—we discuss the texts of the sequence of assignments that the undergraduate course is using as well as the writing the undergraduate students are doing in response to those assignments.

One critical reaction that a syllabus of this sort tends to generate, not only but most pointedly from those who have come specifically to study composition, is the degree to which such a course can claim to be "in" composition. We approach this issue from a distance and on a tangent, beginning with our definition of the seminar's project, which, as we say in our course description, is to seek ways "to imagine the profession of English Studies as one with teaching at its center rather than at its periphery." This is, as we see it, the pivot that keeps the reading and the work of the course centered foremost and broadly on teaching, with the discipline of "composition" as its subject/object and the composition classroom as its scene, rather than, for example, on composition as the body of material proper to the course, with teaching constructed as the means for its on-site application in the classroom. Inevitably, our focus on teaching as the ground against which a certain kind of disciplinary work becomes possible connects us very directly with the traditional matrices of composition as a field, in the sense that composition, with its relatively long history of association with the entry-level undergraduate classroom and relatively short history of association with the production of "research," remains the one area of the disciplinary complex comprising English studies in which one can "naturally" and immediately imagine a version of professional life "with teaching at its center." At some point in the seminar then, we rely strategically on a figure-ground inversion, one that allows us simultaneously to foreground and to call into question the assumption that teaching, in some fundamental sense, "belongs" to composition.[10] Composition has, for example, a long history of locating its identity and its interests in what goes on in the undergraduate classroom, of making that site, not just one, but one of the most important constitutional factors for "work" in the discipline, and of bringing to bear on that enterprise everything that the university, English studies and beyond, has to offer. Composition, then, both subsumes and is subsumed by the rubric of "teaching," a paradox that allows us to open up the teaching/research binary in the particular way that is our preference. And our required readings are the markers by which this part of our agenda is announced and one of the primary means by which it is realized.

Something we tended to look for, then, as we chose texts for the

teaching seminars, were instances of (dis)junctures between theory and practice that could be, if not explicitly worked out, at least acknowledged and respected as issues and problems. And one of our tendencies was to yoke a text that is clearly out of date with one that is currently in vogue, in part to consider how theories of reading/teaching had responded to other cultural changes. An example of the former, which we used in one of our seminars, is I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism.* The initial resistance such apparently alien texts tend to generate allowed us to call attention to a critical system *as* a critical system, a set of reading practices *as* something cultivated, arrived at, learned, rather than natural, or naturalized to the extent that they *seem* natural. And because, in this instance, Richards focuses so closely on his own students and his own classroom, we could begin to examine the difficult process *he* faced in translating his set of critical principles—his theory of reading—into a complementary set of classroom practices—a theory of teaching. In short, it showed us what happens, what can happen, when an expert reader of texts seeks to enact *his* method of reading *for* rather than *with* his novice-reader students; when a theory of reading sets up the teacher as *the* expert whose function is to legislate interpretations without necessarily making visible the processes that produce those interpretations. The differences in degree and kind among the various kinds of "authors" Richards is concerned with; the techniques he deploys to construct analogies (or barriers) between himself and his students as readers of poetry, or simply to define how "poetry" will remain differentiated from the kinds of writing he and his students might do in response to it; the lines he opens up, or draws, between teacher and student, writer and reader, poem and essay, in his classroom; all of these topics offer occasions for examining similar distinctions and relationships in our own professional lives as teachers and students, writers and readers, experts and novices, artists and critics. As the discussion of this book unfolded, it became easier to do what some participants, a couple of weeks earlier, might have deemed perhaps presumptuous: to interrogate theory from the place of classroom practice and to test the usefulness of reading theories in terms of how they advance, rather than put a ceiling on, students' roles in the production of knowledge.

To try to call attention to the same nexus of issues and problems in a contemporary venue, from the other side of the critical spectrum, we used Roland Barthes's "Writers, Teachers and Intellectuals" and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author," each of which explores some of the specific problems related to using poststructuralist critical theory as a matrix to guide the reading of certain kinds of social relations, problems that anyone teaching reading and writing needs to grapple with, if not resolve. Texts such as these may serve well (more forcefully in some ways than texts that would seem to be more immediately germane to composition) to critique the relative absence of the figure and the work of the student in most of our professional exchanges. But teaching how to enact the implications of that critique—teaching, that is, to talk in complex and effective ways about student writing, teaching to devote, for example, a whole class to the systematic discussion of one student essay as a means of theorizing reading and writing—is another matter altogether. And that is not because graduate students, or novice teachers generally, are unwilling to execute that translation. It is simply because our profession does not value, and does not provide many models for, that kind of work. But this is exactly the kind of scholarly relation between theory and practice that we want to foster. Therefore, we encourage the seminar's participants to behave as readers of their students' work much as they would as readers of their colleagues' work. While there are obvious differences of degree between these two types of writing, our approach presumes that there are not, or at least should not be, intractable differences of kind. If one might argue that it takes "good" writing to elicit engagement and respectful response from a reader, our approach would argue as well that it takes engagement and respectful response from a reader to elicit "good" writing. What that term "good" comes to mean, in our approach, is ultimately more a product of a teacher's reactions and the revisions they require and promote than it is of some pre-existing stylistic template or of the talent of our student writers. We specifically discourage readerly habits that seek examples of "bad" writing to bring to the attention of the undergraduate classroom, or, even worse, to the seminar table. The figure of the student as comically errant is a commonplace in our professional discourse. It is one that

we want to avoid not simply because it is insulting (and it is), not even because it is unwarranted (and it is), but because this representation of the student and her work makes her teacher's work similarly unworthy (and rightly so) of the scholarly status we believe it must earn if the current imbalance in our professional lives is to be rectified.[11]

What we have offered here—*our account of our* way of pursuing that work in our program with our students—is not, of course, a model format for the teaching of teaching. Our ambition has been narrower, and in some ways more general, than that: to suggest, *through* our account, the extent to which a seminar of this sort is bound to produce sets of cultural, institutional and theoretical resistances that, although local, contingent, and personally experienced, can nevertheless be read as complex and telling manifestions (both causes and effects) of our profession's "intractable ambivalence" toward teaching.

What we would like to suggest, then, is that the function that a seminar in the teaching of teaching is given, in any department of English, can be construed as an index of that department's position on its professed mission: Is the seminar given a larger function than to prepare teachers to teach only composition? If so, how does that "larger function" construct and position composition vis-á-vis the rest of the department and the profession generally? If, on the other hand, the seminar is constructed essentially as a venue to train future compositionists, in what ways do the other programs (literature, creative writing, cultural studies, film, etc.) accomplish (or not) this aspect of professional preparation? Are the processes of knowledge formation and dissemination notably different among these various "areas" or "fields?" How so? And what, then, is the relationship (as it is reflected in the instruments for teaching teaching) between these two functions? These are consequential questions. Is it because they are so consequential that our profession at large keeps them at bay, contains them, by not bringing them to light?

Notes

1. For example, at meetings responsible for the outcome of faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure cases.

2. Research on the teaching of teaching in English is, as might be expected, scattered fairly thinly here and there through our professional literature. A survey of *College English* over the last decade or so turned up several pieces that were indirectly useful to us and which we want to note here. One is Sandra Stotsky's review "How to Restore the Professional Status of Teachers: Three Useful but Troubling Perspectives." This review offers a few angles of entrance into the general, ongoing debate about how English gets taught and teachers get constructed. While the books reviewed have little to do with the sort of teaching of teaching that interests us here, one of them, *Working Together: A Guide for Teacher-Researchers*, edited by Marian M. Mohr and Marion S. MacLean, offers an example of the sort of renegotiation of the relationship between teaching and research that has been fostered by the National Writing Project, through its various local units, including The Western Pennsylvania Writing Project housed at the University of Pittsburgh. The discourse of the "teacher-researcher" has had a powerful, if often locally concentrated, effect on how teachers K-12 imagine their classroom roles and their collegial relationships, both with one another and with university "researchers." There are numerous other useful books, articles and studies that have come out of this "movement," this discourse, most since Stotsky's review was published. They can be keyed into via the rubric of "teacher-researcher" or the National Writing Project. Boynton-Cook and Heinemann have been the predominant outlets for the books in this vein. Another piece we looked at was Lad Tobin's "Reading Students, Reading Ourselves: Revising the Teacher's Role in the Writing Class." While this essay does not directly address issues of teaching teaching, it does offer a good example of the sort of work that becomes possible when the classroom is textualized. A third piece is Nancy Welch's "Resisting the Faith" which offers a different take on, and a critique of, the seminar we taught that year for "University B." Our survey of *College Composition and Communication* returned us to the December 1982 issue which contains a series of short and interesting pieces that have to do with "Preparing Teachers and Tutors of Writing." More recently, there are a number of articles pertinent to these issues, for example, Douglas Hesse's

"Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance." Among recent books that caught our attention are *Changing Classroom Practices,* edited by David B. Downing, and *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program* by Elizabeth Rankin. The former of these is an especially good example of recent efforts to theorize teaching, though not in this specific case the teaching of teaching. The latter offers a kind of ethnographic-hybrid approach to the problems of formation that all novice teachers (in this case five new teaching fellows in a teaching seminar) encounter, as seen through the lens(es) of their teacher's readings of their work. Wendy Bishop's *Something Old, Something New: College Writing Teachers and Classroom Change* employs a similar method—perhaps establishing the precedent for Rankin's work—to study a group of novice teachers who are simultaneously taking a teaching seminar, in this case focusing on how teachers change and why. Judith Goleman's *Working Theory: Critical Composition Studies for Students and Teachers* reached our desk as this article was in it final editing. Our failure to cite any of these sources (or the numerous others we could have) in our text should not be read as a dismissal of their value or importance. This was just not the sort of "research" that opened up for us with a natural turn to a survey of the literature. And it was our project largely to highlight that portion of our "experience" of teaching teaching that was endemic to our site rather than transportable piecemeal elsewhere. We want here to thank the several departmental colleagues who read this essay in draft form and offered valuable feedback and advice. They are David Bartholomae, Joseph Harris, Margaret Marshall, James Seitz, Stephen Sutherland, and Matthew Willen. In addition, we received attentive readings and advice from Richard Miller (Rutgers University) and Kathryn Flannery (University of Indiana), whose article entitled "What Does Theory Have to Do With Me: Concretizing Literacy Theory in a Teacher Preparation Program" (in this issue) we were able to read before we made our final revisions here.

3. Except for occasional critiques, the teaching/research bifurcation is well-entrenched and continues to be reinforced in almost all the layers of our professional lives. To accept it uncritically is to suppress a number of relevant questions: What are the origins of this

bifurcation? What institutional, theoretical, ideological forces maintain it? Does that bifurcation in the humanities—for which the research apparatus doesn't *appear* to produce much "knowledge" with easily identified extra-academic import—have the same functions and the same effects as the research/teaching bifurcation in the sciences—which do *appear* to generate a lot more of such "useful knowledge." For a more extended analysis of this issue see Kameen, "Studying Professionally."

4. These fictions are pernicious because they invalidate the intellectual investment that the process of teaching teaching demands, by constructing that investment as either implausible or unnecessary. The fact that these fictions might have been intended specifically for this purpose has been difficult for us to get across. This is a relatively unknown and forgotten chapter of the history of higher education, one that Salvatori has recently researched and begun to document in *Pedagogy: Disturbing History.*

5. This process of "passing" is complicated in our context by the simultaneous operation of a departmental Committee for the Evaluation and Advancement of Teaching, composed of 4-5 faculty and graduate students, each of whom functions as mentor for 4-5 of the new TA/TFs. It is, finally, CEAT which functions as the instrument of re-appointment.

6. Does one best learn to teach primarily *before* or primarily *while* one teaches? This is an important issue that often becomes the subject of various compromises. Schools of Education generally perform the former of these kinds of training; graduate programs, in the humanities at least, generally perform the latter kind. Why such a dramatic distinction holds between the way K-12 teachers are taught to teach and the way college and university teachers are taught to teach is, oddly, simply ignored as a factor of consequence, either within the academy or in the more general culture, though it was more openly contended in the 19th century, as the teaching of teaching became a concern first of normal schools and then of universities. Calvin Stowe, for example, argued (1838):

> One must begin to teach, before one can begin to be a teacher; and it is infinitely better, both for himself and for

> his pupils, that he should make this beginning under the eye of an experienced teacher, who can give him directions and point out his errors, than that he should blunder on alone, at the risk of ruining multitudes of pupils, before he can learn to teach by the slow process of unaided experience.

Later in the century, William Payne, the first university professor of pedagogy in the U.S., chose to teach his students only theory, leaving it up to them to "apply" it, to put it into practice, on their own, in their own classrooms. His arguments suggest that his focus on theory had a lot to do with his attempt to disassociate himself from his normal school background (whose work he saw as eminently "practical" and hence "a-theoretical") so as to earn status among university colleagues who vehemently contested and openly ridiculed pedagogy's right to academic citizenship. Ironically, in the name of a science of education, he unwittingly contributed to the valorization of research vis-á-vis teaching and to shaping the position that the teaching of teaching is superfluous. (See Salvatori, *Pedagogy: Disturbing History,* for a more fully developed argument along these lines.) When and how it is possible to decide that teachers are ready to be on their own without risking the ruin of "multitudes of pupils" remains a vexed question, one that currently is difficult to attend to effectively and responsibly in institutional sites where the preparation of teachers is contested and/or does not receive adequate support.

7. As Steve Sutherland, who took the seminar and read our account of it, pointed out, we might have been too principled, too unbending in our anxiety to be "rigorous." We think he is right. Both of us have felt this anxiety when teaching this seminar in ways we don't necessarily feel when we teach other graduate seminars.

8. In our department, as in many others, the degree to which such interchange takes place—in either material terms (cross-program teaching, e.g.) or verbal terms (formal or informal discussion of mutually shared scholarly or pedagogical projects)—is severely disciplined by a host of institutional and intellectual habits that are difficult to surmount. We have four quite distinct departmental programs—Cultural Studies, Creative Writing, Composition, Film—that intersect one with another around certain initiatives and in certain informal alliances, but that remain quite separate administratively. One of our ambitions for the seminar has been to construct a forum in which the often seemingly natural grooves and barriers that divide us into disciplinary camps can be, if not overridden, at least breached here and there to allow for some interaction. That we seek to effect and promote an intellectual exchange among our graduate students, and often quite successfully, of the sort that we as a faculty and a profession don't often carry on among ourselves—at least not both long and amicably—is one of the potentially transformative long-range effects of teaching this course.

9. A resistance to reflexivity that is rooted in this complex of assumptions, biases, and discourses, can have significant pedagogical consequences, both for us, for our students, and for their students. In this particular instance, reflexivity is seen as potentially disabling, a block to "creative" expression—and such blocks are experienced quite commonly by writers during the first year in our program, lapses in production that are often attributed directly to the work of the seminar, and perhaps rightly so, though we would want to argue that those "losses" are produced by a much more complex array of forces and pressures than our course can possibly muster and that we have seen them compensated for by certain "gains" in other areas.

10. Several of our early-draft readers have alerted us that our position here might be misconstrued. We discussed, momentarily, eliminating this section. But we both decided, swiftly and wholeheartedly, that this was a crucial aspect not only of our argument but of our "personal" positions on this matter and that it would remain despite the many ways in which it might (or would) be misconstrued. But let us add some provisos here, to suggest at least some of the things that our position is not. We don't in any way mean to suggest that good teaching only happens in composition, or that teachers in other areas are not deeply committed to and reflexive about their teaching. But for reasons that need to be acknowledged and called into question, the formal teaching of teaching in most graduate programs takes place in and through the composition program. This is

not, also, to say that the teaching of teaching does not go on in other sites and in other ways. It *is* to say the credit-bearing, curricular instances of the teaching of teaching most often take place "in" composition. Even in our own department, with a long tradition of cross-programmatic participation in the teaching of teaching, the second half our year-long seminar(s) in teaching—what at the time was called the Seminar in the Teaching of English and previously called the Seminar in the Teaching of Literature—was recently abolished by a departmental vote. While this is not the place to address the myriad of intra-departmental issues related to this decision, the seminar that remains is the Seminar in Teaching Composition, and all first year teaching assignments are in composition rather than in the programs to which the students apply for graduate work. We also want to be clear that we are not arguing that the teaching of teaching "belongs" to composition in a proprietary way. It belongs to composition because an array of institutional and disciplinary forces have (over)determined that that is "where it belongs." And it is exactly the implications, the rationales, and the consequences of this location that we are trying to question and to exploit.

11. The manner in which the student-writer is characterized in our discourse is especially crucial in our approach, which emphasizes revision and gauges the work of reading/writing along a fairly long time-line rather than around specific instances or events. In practice, that might mean responding to a particular student essay in terms of one or more of the essays that have preceded it and the one that is to follow, rather than exclusively in intrinsic terms of content, organization, error, etc. At certain points in the term we might, in fact, find ourselves favoring (even instigating) essays or parts of essays that in superficial terms would seem to be "muddled," "confused," "awkward," over those that are blandly neat and correct. These become junctures or turning points along the way to another kind of "finished" writing. This sort of extended readership is facilitated by a policy of not grading individual essays but a final portfolio of revised work—a practice that was, conversely, designed specifically to promote the sort of reader/writer, teacher/student roles upon which the efficacy of our approach relies.

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