DOMESTICATING ENGLISH STUDIES

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In the spring of 1993, the WPA-List[1] posted announcements of the creation of autonomous writing departments at two universities within a few days of one another. Before long, the metaphor of "divorce" was introduced into the subsequent electronic conversation about the organizational separation of composition studies and literary studies at these institutions. The correspondents quickly tired of their word play exploring the possibilities of the metaphor, perhaps because it was not particularly novel.[2] As part of a larger metaphorical scheme in which composition studies has traditionally been cast as domestic female partner to the man of the house—literary studies—the divorce metaphor and the complementary metaphors which figure composition studies as "mother," "housemaid," and "wife" are no doubt familiar to readers. Rather than rehearsing their use at length here, we will explore the causes and effects of that use. These and other kinship and domestic metaphors that have taken root in academic discourse are more than an imaginative shorthand for describing experience. Metaphors such as these, as well as "home department" and "parent discipline," are part of a linguistic code that helps us "to create relevance and to constrain social identities" (Taylor 17) in the academic context.[3]

Our project is to explore the ways a constellation of domestic metaphors has governed relationships between composition faculty and literature faculty in English departments and, further, governed the way English studies faculty have conceived their role in American universities in the twentieth century.[4] By explicating ways the professional discourse of English Studies has strategically employed domestic metaphors to characterize composition, we hope to

understand what is at stake for participants in the domestic partnership or marriage of composition and literature.[5]

When the traditional relationship between composition and literature in the English department "home" changes radically, as it has with the recent establishment of administratively autonomous writing programs in several colleges and universities, the metaphor of divorce is a handy one for describing the resulting institutional reorganization. The metaphor serves to characterize the separation of any two entities that seem to be joined, because the metaphor encodes three familiar culturally conditioned cognitive strategies: binary thinking, the subsequent gendering of each member of the resulting binary pair, and the tendency to compare every human relationship with those first and most profound relationships which organize our lives: family. Domestic and familial metaphors structure the ways we view all who have become "familiar" through exposure, contact, interaction, and intimacy.

Although we may recognize that clear-cut dichotomies do not exist outside of our minds, these oppositions, as Plato suggested in the *Phaedrus*, do help us to make sense of the world. One of the ways English Studies faculty have traditionally made sense of their world is by employing the binary division of literature/composition. This division, like other binary oppositions, lends itself to being gendered. The male/female dichotomy is basic to our experience and, as with other oppositional categories, our perception of gender differences and our construction of gender relations aid us in finding order and meaning in our existence. In *Thinking About Women*, Mary Ellmann theorizes that gender identity is so fundamental to our perception that we consistently assign gender to all aspects of life. We order and make sense of our experience, not only by employing binary categories, but also by ascribing gender to them. However, as Jane Flax explains, gender relations are "complex and unstable processes" constituted through interrelated and interdependent parts that have no meaning apart from one another (44). These concepts are effectively illustrated in Jack Rosenthal's brief essay "Gender Benders" in which he demonstrates that people frequently ascribe to objects what he calls "hidden gender."

Asked to name the gender of chicken soup, for instance, one would probably say that it has none. But when chicken soup is paired with beef soup in an oppositional relationship, says Rosenthal, most people identify the chicken soup as feminine and the beef soup as masculine (303). Rosenthal maintains that hidden gender arises not from the words themselves but from the pairings (304).[6] This instability and contextual dependence of gender identity is illustrated by his example of the fork: alone, it has no gender identity, but pair it with a spoon and most people "gender" it masculine. Pair the same fork with a knife, and it becomes feminine.

The inclination to gender items in pairs extends from the concrete world of knives, forks, and spoons to the more abstract realm of organizational structures within institutions. In academe, for example, disciplines acquire an unstable gender identity through oppositional relationships to other disciplines. Literary studies, as one of the humanities, is feminine in relation to the masculine sciences, but masculine in its relationship to composition, and the gender assignment of each item in each pair is dependent upon the oppositional relationship. If gender identity and status is a matter of *relationship*, then in terms of English department relations, both composition and literature are gendered only because they have been placed in a binary pair.

In the early years of this century some male scholars were troubled by the growing concentration of women in certain liberal arts disciplines. Such academics feared that the humanities might become "the preserve of women," that "red-blooded males might be driven out by 'sex repulsion,' leaving the liberal arts wan and timid" (Clifford 169). While males (red-blooded or not) never were driven out, the humanities came to be perceived as feminine, particularly in relation to the sciences. Northrop Frye, in a 1975 essay in *Critical Inquiry*, described how the American (and presumably male) humanist faced

> . . . the dismal sexist symbology surrounding the humanities which he meets everywhere, even in the university itself, from freshman classes to the president's office. This symbology, or whatever one should call it, says that the sciences, especially the physical sciences, are

> rugged, aggressive, out in the world doing things, and so symbolically male, whereas the literatures are narcissistic, intuitive, fanciful, staying at home and making the home more beautiful but not doing anything serious and are therefore symbolically female. (qtd. in Showalter "Toward a Feminist Poetics" 140)

The "dismal sexist symbology" at which Frye bristled is still at work in higher education, where, if we assign gender to scholastic disciplines, we also hierarchize those which are "male" above those which are "female" to replicate the gender relations between men and women in the "real" world. Susan Sage Heinzelman, for instance, suggests that "it is because the humanities have been 'feminized' in their relation to the professional schools and sciences that they get 'screwed' in the academy" (14).

If the humanities have been perceived as "soft" and symbolically feminine, English, as one branch of the humanities, has also been positioned as feminine in its relationship to other "harder" humanities disciplines. According to Susan Miller, there is evidence that English scholarship, comprised of vernacular language and literature rather than the classics, was at first associated with the "dilettantish, womanish images of belles lettres. It was, that is, letters for belles, identified as a 'pink sunsets' tradition of teacups and limp wrists . . . . 'English' was perceived as a 'soft,' not rigorous subject . . . ("The Feminization" 42–43).

But if literature is gendered feminine in relation to the other humanities disciplines and in relation to the sciences, like Rosenthal's fork, its gender is unstable, and in opposition to composition, it assumes masculine status. In the following discussion, we will explore this gendering of the binary pair composition/literature.

Composition teaching's feminine and subordinate position in the traditional English department hierarchy has been repeatedly encoded in our professional discourse by metaphors which inscribe composition as the "woman of the house," comparing the English department to a "home" environment and the relationships therein to familial ones.[7] Characterizing composition as "feminine" has not been an entirely

metaphorical description, insofar as women outnumber men in the field[8]; nevertheless, professional discourse in English Studies has addressed the actual gender distribution of English Studies faculty far less often than it has employed feminine metaphors to describe composition. The most common feminine metaphors are those which confine composition to the domestic sphere: mother, housewife, and mate. We will discuss each of these metaphors separately, and then as a conceptual cluster.

Mother Inferior

The maternal metaphor has commonly been invoked, particularly by women in the field, to valorize an alternative pedagogical style. For example, in a well-known 1988 *CCC* essay, Elizabeth Flynn suggested, "The emerging field of composition studies could be described as a feminization of our previous conceptions of how writers write and how writing should be taught . . . . In a sense, composition specialists replace the figure of the authoritative father with an image of a nurturing mother" (423).

In fact, role expectations of the composition teacher often have paralleled the expectations of the "good" mother. As a good mother trains her children in proper behavior, so, too, a "good" composition teacher is expected to instruct her students to employ proper grammar, style, and usage. In their 1986 essay "Transforming the Composition Classroom," Elisabeth Daumer and Sandra Runzo observed that "mothering and teaching partake in an important social function: the work of 'socializing' and 'civilizing'" (45).

"Process" composition pedagogy in particular has been characterized as embodying distinctly maternal qualities. Daumer and Runzo claimed that the nonauthoritarian stance of process pedagogy encourages a more "motherly" style of teaching: "the maternal teacher no longer sees herself as a judge who enforces external standards by grading students' ability to comply with them" (48–49). However positive this inscription of the composition teacher as mother, the metaphor brings with it other, less desirable conceptual weight. If the composition teacher is a mother, her students are children—a

conceptualization of students that infantilizes them as dependent and implies that developing writing abilities is an activity confined to childhood.

Teaching writing is also feminized by the perspective that views academia as analogous to traditional Catholic church hierarchy. In *Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English,* Robert Scholes demonstrated that the division of texts into literary and nonliterary ultimately reproduces Western religious institutions' separation of sacred and profane texts, high priests and lay persons. Elsewhere, in a playful yet insightful argument, Mary Savage insisted that many among the professoriate have been afflicted with "academentia," a condition that begins in "their earliest days as freshmen" when "future academics are urged to cut themselves off from a mundane inheritance in order to gain a sacred one" (14). The condition is then compounded by overspecialization and "delusions of a patriarchal sort" (14) based on disciplinary hierarchies. Given the clerical quality of academic life, she speculated, the following string of propositions might suggest how this delusion operates in English departments: "All churches are Roman Catholic; All universities are churches; All English departments are universities; All English professors are clerics; All teachers of writing are women" (15)—and women, of course, are unfit for the higher orders of the church. Savage called this system a symptom of "the serious patriarchal disease of the wider culture" according to which "activities that seem confused, untidy, or dirty should be projected down the hierarchy as the responsibility of subordinates" (15). Therefore nurturance—one such activity—is women's work, but not men's work; and the same nurturant qualities celebrated by process pedagogy render it fit only for church subordinates—women—who are by their nature, according to orthodox Christian doctrine (and patriarchal academic doctrine), impure.

In decentralizing the teacher and creating a horizontal rather than top-down social structure for the classroom, composition teachers' attempts to redefine their role may be likened to those of the Reformation movement in the face of a Roman Catholic hegemony: they have worked to obviate the need for a mediator between suppliant and God, student sinner and sacred text. Yet even if composition teaching has been anti-

hierarchical in its own ideology, for a long time it existed in an entrenched hierarchy deeply invested with an almost medieval feudalism; figured as mother/teacher/nun/laity it ranked lower than the sacred priesthood of literary studies in the monastic/academic order of the English department. This division has replicated itself in a number of other binary oppositions: sacred aesthetic text over profane, worldly text; scholarly research and theory over teacherly practice; professing to graduate students over nurturing the voices of undergraduates.

James Berlin maintained in his 1991 essay, "Rhetoric, Poetic, and Culture: Contested Boundaries in English Studies," that an English Studies marked by the "rhetoric/poetic bifurcation" continues to privilege those who interpret literature; thus, Berlin charged, "the college English department's insistence on the division of the literary and the nonliterary with its invidious dichotomies has served to entitle those already entitled and to disempower the disempowered, doing so in the name of the sacred literary text" (33–34). Literary texts—even after the defrocking of New Criticism and even in the wake of canonical reformation—prevailed as sacred, literature professors as what Fish has called "a priesthood of a culture already made" ("Profession Despise Thyself" 364), literature as the Holy Father of English Studies, and composition as the nurturing, other-centered mother, as Mother Inferior.

Labor of Love

A third effect of the mother metaphor for the composition teacher is to figure her work as labor for which material rewards are neither expected nor appropriate. Psychologist Jean Baker Miller has argued, "There is no question that the dominant society has said, men will do the important work; women will tend to the 'lesser task' of helping other human beings to develop" (40). For men, writes Miller, to be "attuned to and responsive to the needs of others" is "dis-rewarded" (70–71). While literature professors are certainly not dis-rewarded for teaching well, they are expected to focus their main energies on professional self-advancement through

publication—and not primarily on the needs of their students. The composition teacher/mother's primary work, however, has not been defined as personal professional advancement via scholarly publication; instead, her main focus is supposed to center upon her students. In *Motherteacher: The Feminization of American Education*, Redding Sugg, Jr. illustrates ways in which traditional ideals of womanhood and motherhood have been built upon images of domesticity but, above all, self-sacrifice (45). Susan Miller's 1991 essay "The Feminization of Composition" echoed these terms in describing the composition teacher as a figure whom the mystique of motherhood has endowed "with qualities like those of the mythologized mother: self-sacrifice, 'dedication,' 'caring,' and enormous capacities for untheorized attention to detail" (46). Lower pay for women in composition has been justified, Margie Burns observes, by "(often tacit) presumptions of dedication, altruism . . . and the like" (6). If composition is labor then, like much of women's work, it is a "labor of love" that does not seem to require the same financial remuneration as "real" scholarly work.[9] Extending the mystique of motherhood to writing teachers suggests that they are expected to teach not for money but for love.

Dirty Work and Fruitless Labor

The domestic figure of the housewife is closely linked to the metaphorical mother. Just as the mother's duties are labors of love, so are the housewife's daily chores. Jane L. Collins has argued that though housewives perform the tasks that are necessary to "reconstitute classes and conditions of work from day to day and generation to generation" (4), they do not see themselves as producing labor power but rather as "acting to meet the needs of their families out of affection or love" (9). Ideologies such as these "mask the true nature of production and legitimize exploitation" (9).

In a discussion of women's domestic labor in *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir claimed that "few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean house becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day" (451).[10] De Beauvoir argued

that housework has "a negative basis: cleaning is getting rid of dirt, tidying up is eliminating disorder" (451). While everyone may not share this negative attitude toward literal housework, clearly "housework" is a cultural metaphor for repetitive, "dirty" work.

Jean Baker Miller describes the usual domestic relationship, claiming that "in a family setting, men very early in life acquire the sense that they are members of a superior group" (42). As members of a dominant group, men define the acceptable roles for subordinates which "typically involve providing services that no dominant group wants to provide for itself" (6). As subordinates, women perform the "less-valued tasks" like housework (22). In the past, relationships among English department faculty have often mirrored the usual domestic relationship between men and women: literature faculty have been the dominants who assign prestige to the work they choose for themselves and devalue the work (teaching writing) that they consign to (usually female) subordinates. In 1990, Wanda Martin pointed out, "tenured academics control their time and choose their activities to an extent virtually unknown among other classes of salaried workers. One of the activities tenured people least often choose is teaching writing courses" (132). Because we're socialized early on to think of housework as women's work, using the housework metaphor to describe composition has carried with it the implication not only that teaching composition is a chore but that it is natural and right that women should do it.

Composition has been seen as a "service" for the institution in which it is housed (Chapman 1-2; Daumer and Runzo 46). Teaching composition has been called the "drudge" work (Holbrook 207) or the "dirty work" (Daumer and Runzo 47) of the department. Like housework, teaching composition has often been described in our professional discourse not as a positive creative activity, but rather as "clean[ing] up the messes that students with deficits in their 'skills' brought with them into the academy" (Kameen 170), "the meticulous correction of all those themes" (Bechtel 180), and even as "fruitless labor" (Harmon 11).

Composition teachers have frequently been described as the professional equivalent of domestic drudges, the

"housewives" of the department. In 1988, a department chair (a woman) recalled how a previous chair in her department (a man) responded to a request to raise composition instructors' salaries. He announced, in effect, "If they don't like it here, let 'em leave. We can replace 'em with other frustrated housewives" (Dalbey 31).

Meryl Altman's 1990 essay described "falling in love" with the metaphor "teaching composition is the housework of the English department" (501) because it so aptly described her own experience. Here is how Altman "unpacked" the metaphor:

> . . . composition is repetitive, boring, intrinsically unrewarding; it carries low professional status; in many places, it doesn't really count as professional work at all (it is done by adjunct faculty and graduate students); it is absolutely necessary to the functioning of everyone in the department and the university, but those who do it get no recognition for this; because of the low pay and low status, it is a task overwhelmingly performed by women; this is a national fact and a problem, which no one in power talks about very much. (501)

As the above examples illustrate, whether the housework metaphor has been used by others to devalue teaching composition or by composition teachers themselves to complain about their status, its implications have always been negative.

Furthermore, teaching composition—both metaphorically and to some extent literally "women's work"—has been viewed as more time-consuming and more labor-intensive than the job of teaching literature. In 1980, one English department professor explained it in the following terms:

> As our majors abandon us for the marketing department, we grab for ourselves those literature courses that are still attracting students and relegate to the junior staff the teaching of composition (admittedly a tougher job, requiring more work and vitality than talking about great books). (McLeod 34)

Adopting metaphors of domestic labor to describe the teaching of composition has transformed "hard work" into "service" which, as Altman observed, "doesn't really count as professional work at all" (501).

This metaphorical transformation has implied that, as female domestics, composition teachers provide for the basic needs of the English department home, thus endowing the work of their counterparts, literature faculty, with the cultural importance of masculine endeavor. Sociologist Dorothy E. Smith claims, "If [man] is to participate fully in the abstract mode of action, then he must be liberated also from having to attend to his needs, etc., in the concrete and particular" (89). That liberation is provided by "a woman who keeps house for him, bears and cares for his children, washes his clothes, looks after him when he is sick, and generally provides for the logistics of his bodily existence" (90). Thus, when composition faculty are figured as housewives, the image of their work is tied to the concrete and particular while the work of literature faculty is relegated to the abstract realm, characterizations that are inaccurate for both groups

In "The Feminization of Composition," Susan Miller described composition as the "work" of the English department and literature as the "play" (45). However, a more salient distinction is that between faculty who identify themselves as teachers and those who identify themselves as primarily scholars. This familiar academic binary division, which often manifests itself as composition teacher/literature scholar in traditional English departments, replicates the distinction between paid labor and unpaid labor in a capitalistic economy. Our academic reward system, reflecting our capitalistic economic culture, values and rewards research and the consequent publication as *productive* labor; but the system has been unable to assign a measurable value to teaching, a *re-productive* activity that generates and maintains the labor force itself. That the academic culture operates in a capitalistic economy is nowhere more evident than in the traditional English department. Though the graduate teaching assistants and part-time faculty, a majority of whom teach the composition courses that typically constitute more than half of an English department's course offerings, are not precisely

unpaid laborers, their salaries can seem insignificant in comparison to those of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the department, a majority of whom are literary scholars.

In a Marxist-feminist analysis of housework, Heidi Hartmann argues that "Patriarchy's material base is men's control of women's labor; both in the household and in the labor market, the division of labor tends to benefit men" (114). The nuclear family, with the monogamous, heterosexual marriage as its base, organizes this control. Just as the value of women's domestic labor is not included in calculations of the gross national product, the value of the composition teacher/wife's labor is often hidden in the economy of the English Department. The estimated 1986 market value of the "labor performed annually by the average American housewife" was $40,288.04 (Lapham, et al. 58). But, as Ruth Hubbard observes, "women's work is often trivialized, ignored, and undervalued both in economic and political terms" (307).

Likewise, part-time instructors' or graduate teaching assistants' contributions to the English department's budget allocation, if calculated in the formulaic terms of the FTES generated by the number of students they teach, far exceeds the salary they are paid. Those extra dollars bankroll tenured professors' assigned time for research and teaching graduate seminars with lower enrollments. When the low wage worker in the English department is the composition teacher and the high wage worker is the literature professor, composition is cast in the role of unpaid housewife. Ironically, this situation occasionally misleads department faculty into believing that literature courses support the department's economy while the composition courses, "service courses," are a drain upon the department's "resources"—much as the traditional wage-earning husband believed his income "supported" his housewife because she brought home no paycheck.

A Less Perfect Union

Figuring the composition teacher as mother and her work as housework has created a conceptual framework that has also positioned composition as the metaphorical "wife" of literature. Patricia Bizzell explicitly named this relationship when she

observed in her 1986 essay that "if [composition and literature] have cohabited, composition studies has often appeared to be the 'wife' whose labor goes unrecognized and unrewarded" (175). Likewise, Charles Schuster noted in 1991 that for many years, the job of teaching composition was, at least in part, "literally done by . . . spouses" (88) of department faculty; moreover, he maintained that

> if writing represents the feminine principle, then literary criticism (New Criticism, Critical Theory, even Feminist Theory) is the father, the husband, the phallocentric principle . . . . They wield the wand of power . . . . Married to these figures (and an uneasy marriage it is) are the writing faculty, dutiful wives who do much of the dirty work . . . . That is the primary function of the composition wives: to maintain the house and raise the children, in this case the thousands of undergraduates who enroll in composition classes. (88)

The marriage metaphor implies that composition and literature exist in a complementary and exclusive relationship; these domestic, familial metaphors have inhibited both composition and literature faculty from conceptualizing their fields in ways that would encourage exploration and development of possibly fruitful relationships with other disciplines such as anthropology, historiography, and political science.

The domestic metaphors we have examined here—mother, maid, wife—when considered individually, may seem to be no more than figures of speech, clever though troubling uses of figurative language, mere linguistic choices on the part of individual writers who have used them. When taken together, however, they constitute a conceptual cluster that encodes the values of English department culture in the figure of composition as domestic female. This metaphorical scheme is only being carried to its logical conclusion when the term "divorce" is used to describe an organizational structure that separates composition and literature into equally autonomous administrative units. Lawrence Poston has reviewed some of the discussion surrounding the issue, observing that ". . . Robert Scholes articulates 'a case for divorce' based on the fundamental

inequality of the two parties within existing departmental structures" while "Paul Hernandi seems to be urging intensive marital counseling, perhaps even a form of Marriage Encounter" (16).

Hernandi's recommendation of counseling for the partners in this troubled marriage is not surprising. That divorce is a last regrettable alternative is a pervasive cultural myth. It is no surprise that English Studies faculty are tempted to rewrite the outcome so there is a happy ending. Their infatuation with this cluster of domestic metaphors has seduced them into extending their strong feelings about family relationships and marital fidelity to professional relationships and disciplinary identities. As a result, a commitment to family values has not only worked to make the system of domestic metaphors seem unproblematic, but also maintained the status quo in our professional lives.

Breaking Up the Happy Home

In the past, positioning composition teaching as the motherly, domestic work of the English department and as the wife of literature clearly provided economic benefits to literature faculty and secured the material base of literature's hegemony. Viewing the teaching of composition to undergraduates as "drudge" work—the equivalent of housekeeping and its associated unpleasant tasks—justified a system which left non-composition faculty free to perform the "conceptual" work, the scholarly research and publishing that led to professional rewards.

While domestic metaphors have been the most popular, other metaphors have been used to describe the composition teacher's labor: janitor, slave, and fieldhand.[11] If these other metaphors had the resonance of the domestic figures, the discourse of English professionals would be likely to describe the termination or alteration of the relationship as social or political revolution rather than as "divorce." That it hasn't simply affirms that the domestic partnership between composition and literature is a metaphor English Studies faculty live by.

Fearing a breakup of this domestic partnership, English faculty in many institutions have taken steps to realign the balance of departmental power, creating tenure-track positions for composition specialists and instituting upper division and graduate composition/rhetoric courses. However difficult these changes may have been, the alternative, divorce, can be frightening. In 1988, J. Hillis Miller expressed such a fear in strong terms:

> The worst catastrophe that could befall the study of English literature would be to allow the programs in expository writing to become separate empires in the universities and colleges, wholly cut off from the departments of English and American literature . . . . Deans, provosts, and presidents these days are a little dubious about the function of the study of literature. In fact many of them have always been dubious. They have tended to assume that the real function of departments of English is to teach good writing . . . [which] they are willing to fund. They are much less willing to fund the study of literature, particularly if enrollments in courses in Chaucer, Milton, and Wordsworth go down markedly. Departments of English that cut themselves off from expository writing will, one can predict, be punished for it. They will atrophy in the way we fear. (94)

For composition faculty who have feared separation because it is seen as a breaking of family ties, this kind of language has had the force of emotional blackmail.[12] As Maxine Hairston explained in her 1985 CCCC chair's address, "we have complex psychological bonds to the people who so frequently are our adversaries" ("Breaking Our Bonds" 273).

Thus, many compositionists have sought to write a happy ending to the narrative of life in the English department, suggesting a reconciliation, a new beginning for a troubled marriage. (See, for example, Horner's *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap*; Lunsford, Moglen, and Slevin's, *The Future of Doctoral Studies in English*; and Richard E. Miller's recent CCC essay, "Composing English Studies: Towards a Social History of

the Discipline.") "And they lived happily ever after" is, after all, a powerful cultural narrative.

The language that has constructed professional relationships among English department faculty has gendered their work in ways that are neither accurate nor appropriate. If this gendering hadn't led English faculty to view the establishment of autonomous writing departments as the emotional equivalent of divorce, if they hadn't invested professional relationships with all the moral valence of family ties, they might be better able to evaluate the possible benefits as well as the costs of institutional reorganization.

The domestic metaphors have narrowed the academy's power to conceptualize its expectations of composition studies. As long as composition teachers were seen as mothers, their students were seen as children. Infantilizing developing writers has limited researchers' interest in the composing practices of adult and adept writers in contexts beyond the classroom. As long as teaching composition was defined as the chore of cleaning up the messes in student papers, effective writing seemed transparent. This reductive conceptualization has restricted investigations of the social and political complexities of rhetorical acts.

As long as composition studies are cast in the role of domestic partner to literary studies, it will seem right to maintain an exclusive relationship. Exploration of the role of writing in developing and maintaining other scholarly disciplines will seem to be a violation and betrayal of trust.

Just as gender relationships in other cultural spheres have been altering, relationships between composition and literature faculty are undergoing change. Discussions of differences and similarities between composition and literature will be more intellectually stimulating, more productive, and less threatening to all involved if English Studies faculty can resist the temptation to view professional relationship in terms of family—happy or unhappy.

Disciplinary discourse has already begun to move beyond the literature/ composition "killer dichotomy," yet compositionists must take care not to introduce new killer dichotomies opposing the university to composition teaching or composition scholars to composition teachers. Just as the

"happily ever after" narrative tempts, so do substitutions of new "family" relationships that merely replace the old father/mate/husband with a new one for the composition mother/maid/wife.

As composition studies professionals ourselves, knowing our discourse creates our reality as well as describes it, we are well aware of the dangers of prescribing new metaphors to live by. It is difficult to find metaphors that are unproblematic—business and industrial metaphors, for example, are as ill-fitting as metaphors of family or religion. But we can suggest a few ways our readers can work to undermine vestiges of domestic metaphors for conceptualizing English studies. Parental metaphors for teaching might be replaced by the metaphor of coaching or consulting; we can reinforce the shift from focusing on "cleaning up" student errors to a focusing on the "productive" work of composing; and we can become more knowledgeable about the actual bases for determining departmental budget allocations in our institutions, sorting out more carefully the actual contributions each faculty member's work makes to the department's whole economy.

Perhaps, as we develop new understandings of what we do as teachers of writing, we will discover new descriptions of the ways we value our work—new metaphors to live by.

NOTES

[1] The WPA-List is an on-line conversation of subscribers who are interested in issues of writing program administration.

[2] See Little and Rose, and Rose.

[3] See also Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*.

[4] Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition* introduced and explored the explanatory power of the *carnival* metaphor as an aid to a critique of the position of composition studies, composition students, and composition teachers in the academy. Our analysis here examines metaphors that are ubiquitous but less self-consciously and imaginatively used in professional discourse to characterize the role of composition teachers.

[5] We recognize that in the process of examining these metaphors we reinscribe them and face the same risks encountered by Lynn Bloom's "I Want a Writing Director," an imitation of Judy Syfer's ironic essay, "I Want a Wife." Each time these domestic metaphors are used, they recreate and reinscribe a domestic partnership between composition studies and literary studies.

[6] The theory underlying Rosenthal's gender game closely resembles Saussurean linguistic theory, based on the concept of the sign, which consists of a mental concept (signified) and a sound image (signifier). Saussure defined the sign as being completely arbitrary and carrying no inherent meaning; a sign derives meaning through opposition to other signs. Within any language system, according to Saussure, it is the opposition of terms, their relationship to each other, which gives them linguistic value and identity.

[7] See, for example, Schuster, Parker, Bizzell, Robinson, and Mead and Morris.

[8] Robert Connors notes that by 1929, 38 percent of all composition instructors were women; the English department employed the highest proportion of women found in any department—with the exception of home economics (121). From the First World War until the present women have made up a large proportion of the "permanent underclass" (108) of composition instructors in the English department and ". . . even today, freshman staffs contain more female instructors than any other instructor corps on campuses" (121). Sue Ellen Holbrook points out that roughly two-thirds of the members of the National Council of Teachers of English are women, and that at the annual Conference on College Composition and Communication well over half of the program participants in recent years have been women (209). As Holbrook notes, "When women form less than a third (27.5 percent) of the faculty overall, they do a disproportionate share of composition teaching" (209).

[9] Holbrook also notes that "the linkage between nurturance and service, teaching, and wages lower than men's" that is common in lower levels of the educational system "recurs as women break into university teaching and as they proliferate in college composition" (204).

[10] As long ago as 1895, a rhetoric professor also alluded to the mythical character's punishing task of endlessly rolling a stone uphill and watching it roll down again, referring to the teaching of composition as "our Sisyphyaean labors" (cited in Connors 113).

[11] Wanda Martin complains that composition teachers are thought of as menials or janitors (123); Maxine Hairston warns against the dangers of too much paper marking in "On Not Being a Composition Slave"; an anonymous adjunct instructor in *Rhetoric Review*'s "Burkean Parlor" writes of the "stories we need to tell about what has happened to us as temporary teachers, as the fieldhands of the profession, to give those who have not been in our position an idea of what it is like to be there" ("Tales from the Field" 186); and Dennis Szilak announces "There is work for teachers of composition: jobs for pickers, piece-workers, day laborers, sharecroppers—only transients need apply" (25).

[12] J. Hillis Miller's rhetoric has softened considerably in the last few years, as his recent interview with Gary A. Olson, published in the Fall 1994 issue of *Journal of Advanced Composition*, demonstrates: "But I think on principled reasons, composition ought to stay in English departments, not to help composition but to help the English departments. It's good for them to have the composition people" (324). Setting aside the issues Miller raises with his implied distinction between English departments and composition studies, it is clear that Miller still defines the relationship in terms of need.

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