Preparing Graduate Students to Teach Literature: Composition Studies as a Possible Foundation

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In a still-crowded job market, many graduate students in literary studies think that they will never land a tenure-track position unless they churn out conference papers and articles. As John Guillory (1996) notes, their drive to establish research credentials amounts to "preprofessionalism," for they feel obliged to prove themselves as scholars even before they become full-fledged members of a discipline. Understandably, this imperative has been decried by faculty who observe it and by the would-be faculty who suffer from it. A common complaint is that to generate truly fine literary scholarship, graduate students need more time than the market allows. But its pressures also discourage them from pursuing a potentially more valuable form of preprofessionalism: developing theories and strategies for *teaching* literature.

Even graduate students interested in literature pedagogy may find their departments unresponsive. True, most English graduate programs do provide their students with the opportunity to teach undergraduate literature courses at some point. But having a chance to teach literature is not the same as having a chance to reflect on the process. Ideally, graduate students would meet regularly with veteran faculty to ponder issues and challenges that the teaching of literature involves. Unfortunately, many graduate English programs have not bothered to launch such exchanges.

Elaine Showalter (1999) refers to this shortcoming in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article about her efforts to help graduate students teach lit-

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erature. Showalter describes a pedagogy seminar she conducted at Princeton University for the teaching assistants (TAs) of her undergraduate fiction course. Significantly, the seminar was noncredit, an indication of how the graduate literature curriculum tends to marginalize teaching. Showalter argues persuasively that teaching deserves more attention in the graduate literature curriculum, and her seminar seems one good model for reform. Moreover, she identifies various texts about teaching that she and her TAs found useful.

Yet Showalter (1999: B4) can be chided for hyperbole when she claims that "everyone complains these days that we don't train graduate students to teach, but no one ever seems to do anything about it." Just in the discipline of English, plenty of faculty have dedicated themselves to helping graduate students develop as teachers. These mentors are especially apt to be found among an English department's composition staff, taking responsibility for turning graduate students into teachers of writing. After all, most English graduate programs feel obliged to prepare their students, including specialists in literature, to become writing instructors. The training ranges in length and quality, but at any rate it exists.

Obviously, the attention paid to composition pedagogy reflects the heavy reliance on graduate TAs in first-year writing courses. When the Association of Departments of English Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing surveyed 123 English departments in 1997, it found that eight out of ten sections taught by TAs were in first-year composition ("Report" 1999: 13). In Ph.D.-granting English departments, first-year writing accounted for 71 percent of the teaching done by TAs (17). These numbers do not signify that graduate students are immediately able to teach writing well. On the contrary, the average English graduate program assumes that while it needs its students to teach composition, most of them bring little background to the task. Hence some formal training for it has to be in place.

These statistics suggest that literature is rarely the first subject that graduate students teach. They are likely to have first taught courses in composition and been formally trained to do so. Any subsequent training in literature pedagogy should, I would argue, build on this experience. Indeed, as a field, composition studies has been much more willing than literary studies to see pedagogy as a real subject, worthy of serious analysis in its own right. If, in compiling her bibliography on teaching, Showalter had looked to composition scholarship, she would have found hundreds of relevant publications. Her failure to acknowledge this body of work is a reminder of the ethos suffusing most English graduate programs. Just as they hesitate to see peda-

gogy as an academic concern, so too they suspect that composition studies lacks intellectual substance. For graduate students to get help teaching literature, however, both prejudices will have to fade. Moreover, literature pedagogy's relation to the teaching of writing will need to be thoroughly explored.

As a specialist in composition who has often taught courses in literature, I am especially interested in ways of coordinating pedagogical training for both fields. In this article I seek to encourage such coordination by reflecting on my spring 2000 semester, when I participated in one of my own department's initiatives. Traditionally, my department has devoted much time and energy to helping its graduate students teach writing. Now, supported and inspired by a national grant program called Preparing Future Faculty (PFF), we have launched a range of activities to help them become self-aware and self-confident teachers of literature.[1] For the project in which I participated, faculty members connect a graduate literature course of theirs to an undergraduate one that they are teaching during the same semester. Admittedly, linking courses is not an altogether new idea in English studies. In the first issue of *Pedagogy* Jerome McGann et al. (2001) reports on a similar experiment that McGann conducted at the University of Virginia in 1997. But his model and ours differ in certain ways. For example, while McGann designed a graduate seminar on "Teaching Fiction" that was closely tied to his undergraduate course on "Reading Fiction," our faculty link graduate and undergraduate courses whose relationship to each other is less plain. Our aim is to help students in a regularly offered graduate seminar consider that seminar's implications for undergraduate teaching even when, or especially when, they are not clear.

In deciding which courses to pair, I was drawn to those with broad subjects, which I thought would be easier to link. An especially apt undergraduate course was "Literary Interpretation." Required of beginning English majors, this introduction to methods of literary criticism gave me ample latitude with respect to texts and design. For the same reason, the graduate course that attracted me most was "Special Topics in Literary Study and Theory," whose specific concerns were entirely up to me. Once I had decided on this course, however, I had to pick my "special topic" for it. I deliberately resisted making it pedagogy. Again, the class was supposed to find pedagogical implications in some subject other than teaching itself. Besides, I wanted to attract students from a variety of subfields in English, including students who would normally hesitate to take a course about pedagogy alone. Ultimately, I made the topic contemporary theories of genre, for reasons that I discuss below.

As an experiment in graduate education, this pairing of courses was multifaceted. It had many aspects that I could discuss. But here I will elaborate on a basic epiphany that my graduate class and I achieved: new teachers of literature can indeed draw on their experiences when teaching writing. When I planned the graduate seminar, I did not realize that each of its twelve members had already taught our department's main first-year writing course. As the semester went on, however, they and I found ourselves building on insights we had gained from teaching composition (and, in my case, from training teachers of composition). I will present the lessons we learned in three sections. In the first I argue that for effective training in literature pedagogy to occur, literary studies must welcome certain tenets of composition studies that it has traditionally ignored or disdained. In the second section I emphasize connections that the graduate students in the seminar made to the teaching of writing as they studied and interacted with the undergraduate "Literary Interpretation" class. In the third section I address issues that English departments will probably have to consider should they find the model of paired courses worth emulating. Again, these issues include how the department's composition program might figure in efforts to prepare graduate students to teach literature.

Composition Theory as a Model of Pedagogical Theory

Various circumstances have made English departments slow to offer graduate training in literature pedagogy. One cause of their reluctance is, I suspect, bureaucratic: most of them lack a clear apparatus for providing it. Preparing graduate students to teach writing is plainly the duty of the department's writing program director. Preparing them to teach literature is a task less easily assigned. As I note elsewhere (Schilb forthcoming-b), the very term *writing program director* is marked, signifying composition's marginality in English departments. By contrast, most English faculty consider literature so much a part of their general atmosphere that they would never bother to establish a distinct "literature program director." No doubt this label would strike them as a superfluous description of the chair.

If a department does aim to institute training in literature pedagogy, one plausible candidate for the job of supervisor is the department's director of graduate studies. But even if that person assumes this responsibility, he or she will presumably need to work closely with the director of undergraduate studies, whose realm will probably be the new instructors' first teaching site. It seems logical, too, to involve other colleagues. For one thing, graduate students learning to teach literature may seek as mentors faculty who specialize in

the same period or genres they do. Alternatively, if the graduate students will be assigned to teach introductory courses in literatures of various eras and kinds, the best mentors may be veterans of such courses, whatever their particular areas of expertise. In several respects, at any rate, the whole business has to start from scratch.

The improvisatory nature of much training in literature pedagogy has been borne out in my own department. Our PFF grant was last overseen not by the director of graduate studies or the director of undergraduate studies but by two interested faculty: Steve Watt, a literature specialist, and Christine Farris, who teaches literature from time to time but specializes in composition. Although Steve is now our chair and Christine has served recently as associate chair, they did not assume their PFF responsibilities as part of some official role. Moreover, when Christine asked me to teach paired courses, she was recruiting one of her composition colleagues—in other words, not someone readily seen as a guide for new teachers of literature. To be sure, she and I guessed that my composition background—especially our collaborative work in training teachers of writing—would prove relevant even to this assignment.

Issues of apparatus aside, instituting training in literature pedagogy is easier if the department is ready to join composition studies in firmly associating teaching with scholarship. Obviously, quite a few specialists in literature already care about teaching and strive to excel at it, and quite a few of them see even undergraduate classrooms as places in which to share the fruits of their research. Yet typically, composition specialists are far more apt to see teaching as an occasion to develop and test scholarly insights, not just to apply ideas already formed. They are far more disposed, too, to produce and value analyses of teaching practices, as well as accounts of students' struggles to write. Hence articles about teaching pack composition's leading journals, whereas they rarely appear in the likes of *PMLA*. On the contrary, graduate students who hope to be seen as contributors to literary studies know that they had better write about published texts rather than about their efforts to teach those texts or to help undergraduates create new ones. When much of the English cosmos centers on this value system, it is no wonder that graduate students are seldom able to take a course on teaching their subject. For literature pedagogy to become a curricular item, teaching in general needs to be seen as *enacting* scholarship rather than merely *disseminating* it. Composition specialists provide a model for such valuing through their willingness to consider teaching as a stimulus to inquiry.

But training in literature pedagogy cannot occur unless everyone

involved aims to identify what aspects of literary studies can be taught in the first place. Here again, composition specialists are a good point of reference, for they perpetually weigh what skills a writing class should nurture. Driving their reflections is a belief that learning to write means trying out various moves, whatever they may be. Typically, writing instructors define their courses as sequences of increasingly difficult tasks, through which students get better at composing texts. To use a term made famous by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949), composition pedagogy emphasizes "knowing how" to do something. By contrast, literature instructors often define their courses by the texts on their syllabi. Ask one of them what he or she is teaching this semester, and probably the answer will be "Renaissance Drama," "Victorian Literature," "Twentieth-Century American Fiction," or some other corpus of works, not acts that students will be expected to perform. Thus, at least conversationally, the literature curriculum is oriented toward what Ryle called "knowing that." This term he associated with the acquisition of data rather than the execution of procedure.

Ryle worried that philosophies of education focused on "knowing that" at the expense of "knowing how." He argues that the latter merits a greater role in pedagogical theory than it has been granted, for

> in ordinary life . . . as well as in the business of teaching, we are much more concerned with people's competences than with their cognitive repertoires, with the operations rather than the truths that they learn. Indeed even when we are concerned with their intellectual excellences and deficiencies, we are interested less in the stocks of truths they acquire and retain than in their capacities to find out truths for themselves and their ability to organize and exploit them, when discovered. (Ryle 1949: 28)

Ryle hardly condemns the kind of learning he calls "knowing that." Nor does he contend that philosophers and teachers should focus only on "knowing how." He even concedes, more or less, that these two forms of knowing are not mutually exclusive. Still, with his attention to "knowing how," he invaluably reminds those of us in "the business of teaching" that planning a course involves more than deciding on a reading list. We should determine, too, the strategies we want students to develop and rehearse, so they will be able to shape the world rather than just observe it.

I can imagine several literature faculty protesting my insinuation that they neglect "knowing how." Typically, professors of literature claim to emphasize the skills of "close reading," whatever the texts they have their classes examine. Yet my impression is that, as a pedagogical goal of literary

studies, close reading remains a hazy concept. The term functions largely as a catachresis, a placeholder, substituting for a more exact description of interpretive strategies. Literature faculty often use similarly vague language when asked why English majors repeatedly encounter the same text—say, *King Lear* or "The Yellow Wallpaper"—as they move from course to course. The common explanation is that their second or third exposure to a work enables students to consider it in greater "depth." Perhaps literature specialists' reliance on this term and on the equally murky phrase *close reading* is a residue of the Arnoldian-Leavisite credo that good literary criticism stems from intuitive taste. Significantly, New Criticism, the school of thought most often associated with close reading, is primarily famous not for the analytic moves it *recommends* but for those it programmatically eschews, such as reference to historical context and authorial intent.

Meanwhile, although the average course in literature requires students to submit papers, it spends little class time on identifying and fostering techniques of persuasion employed in the most compelling professional literary scholarship. In fact, as I note elsewhere (Schilb forthcoming-a), literature specialists have produced few books or articles on the rhetoric of their own field. So new teachers of literature may have trouble seeing the ways in which their subjects amount to "knowing how."

Composition studies is capable of the opposite extreme, excessive privileging of procedural knowledge. An imbalance of this sort characterized the field in the 1970s, when composition specialists were enthralled by the word *process*. Just as disconcertingly, certain people in the field today exalt distance learning regardless of its curricula. Still, for a vast number of composition teachers, the content of their students' writing matters. They seek to help their classes explore certain topics and issues, often culled from the interdisciplinary area known as cultural studies. In my department's main first-year composition course, we guide students through moves that we think characterize analytic writing, but the subjects they write about are also important to us. Specifically, we teach the course as a series of inquiries into popular culture, especially into the ideologies operating in its representations related to gender and race. This agenda is aided by our textbooks, including not only David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen's (2000) *Writing Analytically* but also Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon's (2000) *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.* To be sure, the course's prime texts are the students' own writings, their analyses of popular culture's words, images, and narratives. Yet as they proceed through their assignments, they must increasingly relate their arguments to other commentaries on popular culture from *Signs of Life*. In critically appropriating

this prior discourse, they practice a way of strengthening the substance of their own cases.

Because what students write *about* is significant, I would not argue that a composition course such as our first-year one is the same as any literature course they subsequently take. The change in subject does matter. Nor do I assume that a graduate student trained to teach writing is immediately ready to teach literature. Perhaps English departments prefer to think the transition easy, for then there would be no need for them to offer preparation in literature pedagogy per se. Realistically, however, the teaching of literature is bound to differ somewhat from the teaching of writing. For one thing, literature courses are officially responsible for familiarizing students with texts other than their own, whereas composition courses are concerned above all with what students themselves produce. I can attest that teachers moving from composition into literature start to brood about how much they are responsible for "coverage." They get especially nervous when faced with teaching a *Beowulf*–to–Virginia Woolf survey, for the corpus to be "covered" seems impossibly large.

In recent years the pedagogical aim of coverage has been severely questioned, and rightly so. After all, it may lead to students' being bombarded with much more reading than they can assimilate. At the same time, it may preclude attention to the development of their own abilities, the classic priority of writing classes. Nevertheless, a composition specialist should refrain from mocking the "coverage anxiety" that writing instructors may suffer when they start to teach literature. People making this shift need help figuring out how to balance two potentially conflicting goals: the cultivation of students' skills and the illumination of particular literary works. In my graduate seminar dealing with literature pedagogy, we tried to build on our composition background while acknowledging that a literature course posed distinct demands. My accompanying undergraduate "Literary Interpretation" class reminded us of the balancing act required.

Composition Theory in Paired Literature Courses

Let me turn now to identifying connections that the graduate students made to their composition experience as they interacted with my undergraduate class. Although the graduate seminar was titled "Contemporary Theories of Genre," I wanted to stress right away that we would discuss *teaching* and would use my undergraduate classroom as a site for our inquiry. On the first day, then, I emphasized that our reading selections would include James M. Cahalan and David B. Downing's (1991) collection of essays *Practicing The-*

ory in Introductory College Literature Courses. More important, I called attention to the following paragraph in the Goals section of my syllabus:

> This course is supported by our department's Preparing Future Faculty grant and will entail activities related to the grant's aims. We will proceed under the assumption that all members of the class may one day teach an undergraduate literature class and thus will benefit from considering the pedagogical implications of our course. More specifically, we will spend much time discussing how to teach an introductory literature course such as L202, Literary Interpretation, which I am teaching this semester MWF 11:15–12:05. You will receive a copy of my L202 syllabus. Moreover, you will observe this L202 class once, co-direct one of its discussions, and exchange ideas with some of its members in an Oncourse website forum. [Oncourse is an Indiana University system that establishes a Web site for each course.] You will also design your own syllabus for L202 or a similar course.

Because each graduate student did watch me teach the undergraduate class, I was observed twelve times—the most that my teaching had ever been scrutinized. In addition, each visitor briefly reported his or her impressions to the other members of the graduate seminar. More consequential for all of them, naturally, was the team teaching they did as they led discussions in the undergraduate class. I paired them as discussion leaders mainly because I thought that collaboration would encourage them to hatch ideas about teaching that they might not have developed alone. Another benefit of team teaching, I felt, was that it limited to six the number of times the undergraduates had "outsiders" running their class. I need not have worried, for, as things turned out, the undergraduates readily accepted the intruders. A certain commonality of reading bolstered this spirit of community. Although the graduate students read several works of theory that the undergraduates did not, both classes read the same literary texts, which were the subjects of the discussions that the graduate students ran.

I cannot determine, let alone spell out, all that the graduate students might have learned when they watched me teach and when they themselves taught. Their written evaluations of the experience were enthusiastic but limited in detail. But clearly, the observing and discussion leading reminded them of things that they had sensed as writing instructors. While they saw that literature courses tempted them more to lecture, especially when they loved the text under study and burned to point out its marvels, they realized that just as discussions are central to writing classes, so too they should abound in a literature course if its students are to get genuinely involved. Also, the graduate students realized anew some ways of stimulating discussion. Above all, they

remembered that while students may stay mute when their teacher barrages them with leading questions, the same class may chatter when the questions are few and open.

Yet the graduate students also remembered that ample talk may still be glib, especially if the discussion's goals are not clear to the class or, for that matter, to the teacher. But what should these goals be when the focus is a literary text? What conversational moves should the instructor encourage? Although the discussion must stop when the time runs out, what would be a truly productive way to end? As they watched me discuss literary works with my undergraduates, and as they led such discussions themselves, my graduate students wondered how much students should be made aware of particular elements in the text at hand. If students overlook certain aspects of it that their instructor thinks important, does their conversation deserve to be judged inadequate?

What my graduate class came to perceive, I think, was the wisdom of prodding students to elaborate and support observations that they themselves make about the text. We realized that students' talk may improve if their teacher brings up features of the text that they have missed, but we favored keeping such interventions minimal, so the class did not become merely a passive audience for the instructor's exegetical prowess. Looking back at discussions they had led in their composition classes, members of the graduate seminar recalled coaching students above all to *complicate* their initial ideas. This objective is, in fact, affirmed throughout one of our key composition textbooks, *Writing Analytically*. My graduate class now saw that literature courses might operate with much the same objective, helping students make their preliminary views of a text more complex. In this conception of literature pedagogy, the chief goal is to strengthen students' willingness and ability to court subtlety and nuance. Meanwhile, fidelity to "the text itself" loses some stature as a guiding principle. To use Ryle's terms again: instead of being geared to "knowing that" certain texts have certain properties, literature classes practice "knowing how" to analyze texts in the first place. This approach does not require teachers to take a particular stand on the "objectivity" of literary works, either. Literature instructors can focus on students' skills while regarding texts as indisputably real and noteworthy. But the vision that my graduate seminar developed moves literature pedagogy closer to composition pedagogy, while acknowledging that the two do not exactly coincide.

Naturally, my graduate students grew most conscious of their composition past when our seminar turned to considering the "Literary Interpretation" class's papers. On the whole, these undergraduates wrote more adeptly

than I had expected. Nevertheless, their papers exhibited certain problems familiar to the graduate students, for they had seen them back in first-year composition. One problem was the writer's failure to state early in the paper the main issue it would address, the real or potential dispute it would engage. Most of my undergraduates were good at establishing a thesis; fewer excelled at identifying an issue to which their thesis would be a response. In first-year composition, the graduate students recalled, they had spent much time on helping writers establish the question that would drive their analysis. Although the issues to be dealt with in this batch of papers related specifically to literature, the problem struck my graduate students as simply another version of a paper's need to make its stakes clear.

The graduate students also became reacquainted with the problem of moralizing. Veteran users of *Writing Analytically*, they remembered well the book's injunction to "suspend judgment" (Rosenwasser and Stephen 2000: 2–3). Most likely Rosenwasser and Stephen do not mean to imply that complete objectivity is possible; rather, they are suggesting that writing seems more thoughtful when it avoids blunt, simple praise or condemnation. Several of my "Literary Interpretation" class's papers, however, treated characters as if they were thoroughly good or bad, while ignoring features of the text that encouraged more nuanced verdicts. In a way, it comforted the graduate students to know that in this respect, too, a literature class's papers might be familiar territory for them, through which they could journey with Rosenwasser and Stephen's advice as a map.

Yet, having observed my undergraduates converse, the graduate students were surprised to find them moralizing in their writing. Practically all of the discussions in "Literary Interpretation" moved quickly beyond crude evaluation of characters, as if the students knew well how useful it was to suspend judgment. Analyzing this disparity with the graduate students, I pointed out that thoughtful conversationalists may indeed turn simplistic when they write, for they may assume that their authority *as writers* comes from a seeming command of clear, absolute truth. Again, the graduate students had repeatedly encountered this belief in the composition classes they had taught. They just had not expected to discover it in the literature class. Their surprise underscored for them that even literature classes rife with brilliant talk should include writing instruction, for discussions alone may not adequately gauge students' growth. Once more, my graduate students were seeing how useful a background in composition pedagogy can be in the literature classroom.

Writing played an additional role in the Web discussions I set up between the two classes. I wanted to provide both groups with regular oppor-

tunities to share ideas about literature, especially about the texts they both were reading. Furthermore, I hoped that *electronic* exchanges would help the graduate class see how student "texts" may enrich a literature course even when the medium is not print. Through Oncourse, I created six discussion groups, mixing members from both classes in each. Every student, undergraduate and graduate, was required to contribute at least three messages during the semester. I left each group free to pursue whatever line of inquiry it preferred, although periodically I injected a general question, for example, "What things do you usually consider when trying to interpret a short story?"

I wish I could announce that these electronic discussions teemed with insightful dialogue. I must confess, though, that the messages tended to be brief and disconnected. Students, especially the undergraduates, seemed reluctant to participate in the first place, and then not interested in relating their messages to previous postings in their group. Indeed, the Oncourse discussions were the most disappointing aspect of the semester—the element I will reconsider most if and when I pair courses again. I might settle for letting such exchanges develop spontaneously in whatever directions they move, or I might discuss extensively with the participants how to make them better. Among colleagues, I have found different schools of thought about how much teachers should intervene in any electronic agora they create.

One lesson that I drew from the Oncourse debacle—and that I shared with the graduate students—is that an electronic forum constitutes a writing space more complicated than composition specialists of earlier generations ever envisioned. For instance, the exchanges I set up were neither private nor public, at least as these terms are often defined. On the one hand, any of the messages could be seen by two entire classes, which were supposed to engage in dialogue without meeting face to face. On the other hand, the messages were supposed to be informal musings, parallel but supplementary to the writing I would be grading. In recent years several scholars of composition and rhetoric have begun to analyze the discourses emerging in hybrid zones of cyberspace. My experience with Oncourse left me with a new appreciation for their inquiries, which will be increasingly relevant to various courses as English departments use the Internet more.

I must conclude this section with another confession, for my remarks about my graduate students' relationship to my undergraduates' writing may have been misleading. While I did refer often in the graduate seminar to the undergraduates' papers, I did not bring in actual examples for analysis. Nor, for that matter, did I ever have any of the graduate students look at any of the undergraduate class's own texts. In part, my cautiousness stemmed from the

uncertain identity of the graduate seminar. McGann et al.'s (2001) experiment with paired courses tied them closely together. Students in McGann's graduate course, "Teaching Fiction," were supposed to assist him significantly in his undergraduate course, "Reading Fiction." His graduate students inevitably read some of the other class's papers; in fact, each graduate student served as a writing tutor for a group of its members. In my pairing of courses, however, the graduate seminar's topic differed significantly from the undergraduate course's subject. Furthermore, the graduate students were not officially TAs for the undergraduate class; the department had assigned them other instructional duties for the semester. Thus their roles in the undergraduate course were bound to be ambiguous. If they were not merely observers of it, neither were they truly members of its teaching staff. Given their other instructional commitments, they might even have protested had I made them teach or tutor for me much. By keeping the undergraduates' writing from them, I avoided the charge of unfairly burdening them.

But my reluctance to share this writing with the graduate class resulted more from my fear of straining the *undergraduates'* goodwill than from my concern over exploiting the graduate students. From the first day of the semester, I worried that I might impose too much on the undergraduates. I would be subjecting them to numerous appearances by people they did not know: the teams of graduate students who would lead discussions. My allowing these strangers to read their papers might, I thought, strike the undergraduates as going too far. While I like to think of myself as a critic of the Panopticon, I feared that they would consider me an operator of it. My hesitation was compounded by my sense that I could not let the graduate class see an undergraduate's paper unless I had written permission from its author. The process of securing these permissions would underscore for the undergraduates that other people would be scrutinizing their work. This reminder might make them even queasier, a prospect that made me queasy myself.

Nevertheless, I am by no means sure that I was right to keep their texts away from the graduate class. The opportunity to study and comment on these papers might have enabled the graduate students better to link the teaching of literature to their experience as teachers of composition. Also, the undergraduates might have welcomed and found useful their graduate counterparts' responses to their writing. Perhaps my handling of this issue reflects most of all an unreasonable lack of trust in the undergraduates. They might have been more disposed than I was to see the graduate students as their coaches or collaborators. If I should do this pairing of courses again, I will try to be more open-minded, giving both groups plenty of chances to say how

their relationship is evolving and where they would like to see it go. All the same, I will never assume that using undergraduate classes as graduate "teaching labs" is ethically simple. At the very least, the undergraduates need to be told at the start what the arrangement will be, so they have the chance to bow out of it if they want.

Meanwhile, my having withheld the undergraduates' papers from the graduate students makes me realize that my seminar for them did not amount to full-fledged training in literature pedagogy. At some point a program preparing them to teach literature would have to immerse them in the decisions that a literature instructor makes, including decisions about how to grade and comment on papers. Actually, my pairing of courses did not begin to provide my graduate class with the equivalent of student teaching, for no member of the seminar appeared in the undergraduate class more than twice. Even now I am not sure how to define my seminar's role in teacher education. But I tend to see it as a means by which graduate students could *begin* to explore issues of literature pedagogy, with their foray including practice as well as sustained reflection. Moreover, as I have emphasized in this article, both the practice and the reflection build on the graduate students' previous training in composition pedagogy, a valuable connection that has not been an explicit part of graduate professional development before.

If You Try This Experiment at Home

Whatever the limitations of the arrangement, my pairing of courses seemed to benefit both groups—enough, at least, for me to want to attempt it again. Some aspects need review or outright rethinking, of course, and no part of the plan should be deemed vital. The subjects, readings, writing assignments, and interactions of my two courses were not sacrosanct. Still, the pairing might have worked less well with other course topics.

Certainly, the undergraduate topic, literary interpretation, allowed those students as well as their graduate visitors much room for investigating literary studies as a set of skills or methods rather than just a canon of texts. Moreover, I continue to believe that genre was an excellent topic for the graduate seminar. I chose it for three reasons. First, almost all graduate students have to think about concepts of genre at some point in their scholarly or creative pursuits. Second, almost every *teacher* of literature must decide sooner or later whether to use genre as a framework for a particular course. In fact, genre remains a key way of organizing the college English curriculum, on both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. Yet, third, it is surprisingly absent as a subject in English graduate literature courses; relatively few students who

take these seminars have the opportunity to ponder the term at length. Although most teachers of literature rely on genre as a framework, they tend to leave the term untheorized. My impression is that genre was more extensively discussed in English departments back in the 1960s, due to the influence of Northrop Frye's (1957) ultrataxonomic *Anatomy of Criticism* and the Aristotelian concern with genre displayed by Chicago critics such as Wayne C. Booth. Nowadays, studying literary theory means comparing the general hermeneutic procedures of various critical schools, for example, feminism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial criticism. This surveying tends to brush genre aside. In my graduate seminar I aimed to give it much more attention, so would-be teachers of literature would better understand its possible functions as a pedagogical scheme.

On the first day, all twelve students enrolled in the course reported that they had never examined theories of genre before. While they knew that these theories at least tacitly figured in much analysis and teaching of literature, genre was a mysterious subject for them. Hence they started off quite curious about it—and, I could tell, nervous about it. In part, their anxiety reflected their abiding unease with literary theory. We who attended graduate school in theory's heyday, the 1970s and 1980s, do not always appreciate how uncomfortable today's graduate students can be when we ask them to philosophize about literature rather than just read examples of it. But my students' skittishness derived, too, from their fear that genres are nothing more than stifling sets of conventions. This fear especially afflicted the students who defined themselves as creative writers. They suspected that sensitivity to genre would cramp their style, preventing them from producing innovative poetry or fiction. Meanwhile, students who defined themselves mainly as literary critics or historians also worried that dwelling on a text's genre would prove reductive.

Right away I tried to allay these concerns. I noted, and the class agreed, that we were better off consciously discussing genre than letting assumptions about it tacitly affect us. At the same time, I remarked that multiple definitions of *genre* exist, including ones that resist equating the term with inflexible, binding norms. Actually, I said, most contemporary scholarship on genres opposes the Aristotelian view of them as naturally and firmly distinct categories of being. I pointed out that, if anything, this scholarship tends to espouse a Wittgensteinian view; that is, genres are changeable groupings based on mere "family resemblances" and constructed for various practical purposes. Supporting this concept, I said that even when we emphasize a particular text's genre, we have to decide what genre(s) to link it with and what we gain from doing so. Furthermore, I noted that throughout the semester we

would look at literary works that could fit multiple genres or could even be seen as "blurring" them. Most important, I said that although the course would be preoccupied with genre, we did not have to treat it as a God term. Instead, we would test the usefulness of referring to it. Thus I departed from theorists like Anis Bawarshi (2000) who do propose to make genre the cornerstone of English studies. However cogent their arguments, I might have alienated my class had I exalted genre rather than put it up for question.

In the spirit of theorists like Bawarshi, though, I did suggest that attention to genre could connect literary studies with other realms of discourse. After all, the term can be applied as well to "academic," "popular," and "everyday" writing. The students could sense, for example, that literary criticism is a genre. Even in graduate school they had been struggling to identify and enact its characteristic moves. Aware of the challenges that this discourse posed for them, they immediately empathized with my "Literary Interpretation" students, who as new English majors were just starting to learn its strategies.

I also reminded the graduate students of genre issues that they had already faced as instructors of our department's main first-year composition course. In reading a composition student's paper, I suggested, they consciously or unconsciously decided whether it fit the genre called for by the assignment. More generally, our first-year composition course focuses on one kind of discourse: analytic writing about popular culture. The assignments require students to probe the meaning and significance of particular store designs, fashions, ads, and films. In other words, their papers must differ from policy arguments, personal essays, and literary interpretations—the kinds of writing they have often done in high school. Hence an instructor of our course is typically introducing students to what is essentially a new genre for them. Basically, the course becomes a collective exploration of what "analytic writing" entails. Having gone through this process, the members of my graduate seminar could draw on their memories as they investigated the term *genre* itself.

Throughout this article I have suggested that a graduate seminar such as mine works best if conceptually linked to the department's composition program. More specifically, I have pointed out ways that my graduate students tapped into their memories of teaching what I have termed *analytic* writing. Needless to say, not every college composition program focuses on this kind of discourse. Although this is not the place to muster a full-scale case for our writing curriculum, I suspect that literature pedagogy would be harder to connect to a composition program that called for personal writing or policy

arguments, for neither of these genres reappears much in the writing assignments that literature students face. A more plausible alternative, I suppose, is a composition program that has students write analyses of literature. Clearly, this model would enable the program's instructors to move rather smoothly into courses focused on literature in its own right. Yet it is important to remember that students come to first-year composition with a variety of interests; most of them will never become English majors. Given the sheer range of their desires and needs, forcing them to write about literature seems unfair, even parochial. At any rate, when training in literature pedagogy attempts to build on composition pedagogy, the nature of the department's writing program matters. Departments pursuing this linkage need to think about what sort of composition curriculum would aid it.

Obviously, an English department that undertakes my and related initiatives should carefully assess their effects. At the same time, there is value in pluralism. I hope that my own department, along with others, develops a wide range of options for graduate students who seek training in literature pedagogy. Although I have grown especially interested in the particular project I have discussed here, I think that it should be just one of many. Our graduate programs are more apt to produce expert teachers of literature if we offer our students all sorts of invitations to study and practice the role.

For instance, I have mentioned that my department has initiated other projects with its PFF grant besides pairings of courses. Each project in its own way aims to cultivate future teachers of literature. The one involving the most faculty and graduate students is a collaborative form of course design. For many years the department has offered an undergraduate special-topics course under the rubric "Introduction to Writing and Literature." Each section has over a hundred students; each features weekly lectures by a faculty member; and each uses two or more graduate students, who lead weekly discussions and lecture at least once. Yet the sections vary in topic. Historically, the faculty member in charge of a section chooses its subject; then, working alone, he or she establishes the reading list, formulates writing assignments, and decides how to structure the semester. Under PFF auspices, the department has tried a different arrangement. For certain sections of the course, the faculty member still chooses the topic, but the graduate teaching assistants join in making all the other key decisions. They are full partners, so to speak, in the course's construction. Moreover, in the previous semester, they take a class with the faculty member in which they design the course together. Overall, the graduate students gain rich experience not only in teaching a literature course but also in creating it.

I want to conclude by recommending a measure that I think any English department should adopt if it plans to establish any graduate training in literature pedagogy. To me, awarding no credit for such training, as in Showalter's course, is both intellectually and ethically questionable. My graduate seminar carried three credits, and my department has decided that the same number is appropriate for the initiative in which graduate students design an undergraduate course with a faculty member. Meanwhile, our practicum for new teachers of writing is worth two credits. In each case, the amount of credit hours is debatable; personally, I would like to see the practicum credits increased. But it is not debatable that a department must recognize with credit that learning to teach writing and learning to teach literature are vital, intellectually substantive pursuits. A graduate program in English should not only support them but also encourage their symbiosis.

Note

1. A joint venture of the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the National Science Foundation, the Preparing Future Faculty program now involves hundreds of doctoral institutions. According to the "Brief Overview of the PFF Program" offered at its Web site (www.preparing-faculty.org), PFF seeks to prepare graduate students for "the full range of roles and responsibilities subsumed by the terms, [*sic*] research, teaching, and service." A key premise is that "expectations for these responsibilities are often quite different in different campus settings." For example, four-year and community colleges tend to value teaching more than research universities. Of course, even research universities bent on hiring the most promising analysts of literature need people who can also *teach* it thoughtfully and well. Under PFF auspices, graduate programs have pursued a wide variety of projects; this article examines those at Indiana University.

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