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On Constituting and Institutionalizing a Foreign Language Discipline: The Example of Rhetoric and Composition in Departments of English

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IF THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN educational settings is viewed from an international perspective, we find that the language component of the language and literature of the respective mother tongue consists of education in written discourse. The language component of languages and literatures other than the native tongue consists of what we familiarly call foreign languages. Whether the combination is literature and composition or literature and a foreign language is a function not so much of a course of study as of the educational system in which one operates. In the context of American higher education, departments of language and literature have consisted of a recognized *discipline* of literature, subdivided by language of access, and a *field*, traditionally less recognized, of discourse education or foreign language.¹

The past quarter century has witnessed a movement in English departments to constitute the study and teaching of written discourse as a discipline and to define writing teachers who profess that discipline as its practitioners. Rhetoricians have made impressive achievements in professionalizing themselves and institutionalizing their discipline within university English departments. By comparison, the same period has seen only scattered beginnings of such a movement in foreign languages. In this article, I will survey briefly some sentiment for a foreign language discipline, expand on the validity of the parallels between foreign lan-

guages and rhetoric and composition, and trace the background, growth, and achievements of that discipline selectively according to their usefulness as a model for a similar movement in foreign languages.

In 1964, Nelson Brooks spoke of "the language-teaching profession—or what is, unhappily, less a profession than what should be and could be one" (236–37). Brooks argued that "in order to call language teaching a profession, language teachers must establish the discipline they profess" (237). He proposed *linguistics* as the name for this discipline and *linguist* for its practitioners, and he defined its subject matter as "the theory and practice of language and language learning" (231–32). Having proposed and named a discipline, however, Brooks retreated (237) from the radical implications of his proposal to define as a linguist any member of a college foreign language department.

More recently, Hammerly (11–25) has resurrected Brooks's call for a discipline of linguistics, defining its object as "the science of second language teaching and learning" (13). Hammerly locates linguistics between linguistics, psychology, education, and culture, the latter broadly defined to include achievement, behavioral, and informational culture (512–15).

The premise of a recent article by Teschner is that a foreign language discipline, which he calls "applied and educational linguistics," deserves to become a recognized component of the reward structure, graduate curriculum, and research program of university departments of foreign languages and literatures (33–34).

It could be argued that many of the problems Lambert has recently identified in the American foreign language enterprise—e.g., the need

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for "language teachers more conversant with the pedagogical techniques and technologies of their trade" (1)—are a direct result of the failure of language people in departments of foreign languages to establish and profess a foreign language discipline. Defining the outlines of such a discipline and how it could be institutionalized in foreign language departments is something best done collectively in the context of a professional association. In line with Lambert's suggestions (7), however, efforts should be made to extend its scope beyond the teaching and learning of second languages in instructional settings to include second language use and the dynamics of communication and information transfer across language barriers in the world at large. Perhaps some possible directions for the discipline and its research will emerge from the discussion of rhetoric and composition.

As departments of language *and* literature, departments of English and departments of foreign languages are similar in generating many enrollments in composition and second languages but relatively few in literature. According to an extensive, full-dress survey using statistical sampling methods, an estimated sixty-nine percent of all enrollments in English departments nationwide in the fall of 1983 were in courses in writing (Huber & Young, 44). A similar survey for departments of foreign languages is a major desideratum. One would expect any such survey to produce figures even more one-sided in favor of language courses. Required composition sequences in English are typically for one year, less on some campuses; language sequences in foreign languages are usually for two. College foreign language departments, then, have twice as many nonliterature courses at the base of the enrollment pyramid, and the steep enrollment fall-off at the postintermediate level has long been notorious. Thus the college-level enrollment base for a discipline of writing, while extremely broad because composition is almost universally required, is half as deep as for a discipline of foreign languages.

Corresponding to the duality in subject matter is one among faculty according to specialty, self-definition, and preponderance of teaching responsibilities. English departments house literarians and rhetoricians, foreign language departments literarians and language people.²

The modern discipline of written discourse called rhetoric and composition has helped many rhetoricians to make their self-definition explicit and respectable (Gorrell, 34-36). The lack of a foreign language discipline that enjoys an equivalent level of recognition within college foreign language departments has left many foreign language faculty—especially in smaller programs—stranded between literature, linguistics, and teaching methodology without a discipline to call home and without a self-definition appropriate to their teaching duties.

In his 1971 classic, James Kinneavy described English composition as of the mid-sixties as "so clearly the stepchild of the English department that it is not a legitimate area of concern in graduate studies, is not even recognized as a subdivision of . . . English, [and] in some universities is not a valid area of scholarship for advancement in rank" (1). With a few minor adjustments, Kinneavy's description can be recognized as valid for the language component of foreign languages and literatures in many departments today.

Kinneavy argues "that the field of composition . . . is a rich and fertile discipline with a worthy past which should be consulted" (2). This worthy past is classical rhetoric, the oldest discipline in the Western world, and the centerpiece of all education in classical antiquity. In the modern era, classical rhetoric experienced a revival in America in the mid-eighteenth century, and it played an important role in American higher education of the period. The early nineteenth century, however, saw the emergence of influential textbooks that excluded invention—the discovery of arguments and content—and limited the scope of rhetoric to style (Connors, Ede & Lunsford, 1-2). As the century progressed, there was "a preoccupation with standards of usage that grew, by the end of the century, into a cult of correctness" (4). "Departments of Rhetoric in American colleges increasingly became Departments of English Literature and Rhetoric or simply Departments of English," and English departments came to be dominated by literary and philological scholarship (5).

By the early twentieth century, this trend had progressed to the point where scholars in speech and rhetoric felt so ignored and unwelcome in English departments that they seceded in 1914 to found the Speech Association of America,

and the leaders of this movement campaigned for separate speech departments, which were then founded at many institutions within five years (Connors, Ede & Lunsford, 6). (As we will see, the call for secession will repeat itself—this time on behalf of rhetoricians—in the mid-nineteen-eighties.) The secession of speech left the teaching of writing in the hands of the so-called current-traditional rhetoric, a rhetoric largely uninformed by the classical system and, like the grammar-translation method in foreign languages, less a discipline or object of research than merely a tradition of teaching a subject.

The professional association of rhetoric and composition is the Conference on College Composition and Communication. After a successful pilot meeting of compositionists in 1949, the executive committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, fearing fragmentation and secession, agreed to recognize the new association for a trial period as a *conference* within NCTE. The committee stipulated that the two organizations were to have the same treasurer, that NCTE was to publish the CCCC's journal, and that membership in CCCC was to be available only through joint membership in NCTE. This last requirement was to benefit the parent organization, whose rolls swelled with members interested primarily in CCCC (Bird, 33-36, 53). The founding and subsequent consolidation of CCCC has given the English profession two annual meetings: a college-level meeting held each spring and a November NCTE convention with sessions for members of college English departments, English educationists, and elementary, middle school, and high school teachers.

An interesting aspect of the CCCC during its first two decades is the pattern of institutional affiliations of those active in the organization. Bird mentions the affiliations of forty-five persons active in CCCC from its founding through 1967 (33-210). When I compiled a list of these persons and checked it against the twenty-three English departments listed as distinguished according to graduate faculty in the 1966 Cartter report (22), I could identify only eight persons affiliated with English departments in these institutions, of whom two were directors of freshman composition and one was the author of a popular textbook. The more typical affiliations during this period were with regional state campuses, Catholic institutions,

or state universities in less populous states (Western Michigan University, Creighton, University of Nevada). The seventies and eighties have seen a number of prominent rhetoricians in English departments of flagship state universities, but the new discipline's center of gravity is still among the less established and less prestigious departments. It is probably part of the dynamics of American higher education that when new disciplines are constituted to meet pedagogical needs, the process tends to originate *outside* established and prestigious departments. Those who would establish a foreign language discipline should not be fazed by the prospect of doing so mainly from the fringes of the academic prestige hierarchy.

In the first decade or so of its existence, the CCCC could best be described as a professional association of persons engaged in pedagogy. The emphasis at the early meetings was on practical matters relating directly to the content of the freshman course and its administration (Gorrell, 32). Only slowly, and by a series of leaps and starts, did rhetoric and composition develop into the pedagogical *discipline* we know today. At the very outset, however, there was a sense that rhetoricians "needed to establish themselves as a unique group with professional skills based on a distinct body of knowledge," and efforts were made to identify areas of needed research (Bird, 48-49).

The major leap that resulted in the birth of the modern discipline is widely remembered to be the 1963 meeting of the CCCC, where there was a prevailing mood of exciting breakthrough, where a number of papers were delivered that later became highly influential articles, and where Edward P. J. Corbett delivered a paper that was to become the first of a series of articles that culminated in his influential 1965 book, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (Connors, Ede & Lunsford, 10-11).

The creation of a modern discipline of written discourse is closely linked to a revival of classical rhetoric, a revival which broadened the theory and teaching of writing to include invention, arrangement, logic, and the rhetorical aims of discourse. Since the publication of Corbett's book, the revived classical rhetoric has come under attack from the proponents of various "new" rhetorics. As the sort of theoretical debates common within all disciplines, these controversies need not concern us here, for they

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were not attacks on rhetoric as a legitimate discipline with important implications for educational practice. Classical rhetoric in its modern incarnation still has its proponents, and it has provided a comprehensive theoretical base against which other theoretical bases can be tested (Lunsford & Ede).

Classical rhetoric also played an important role in providing an emerging new discipline housed in departments of English with a source of legitimacy. It is difficult for a literarian—a Hemingway specialist, say—to question the work of a rhetorician who can invoke Aristotle, Quintilian, and Cicero. One would wish for a comparable source of legitimizing authority for a foreign language discipline. Louis Kelly reminds us that, in the West, formal second language instruction has existed since classical antiquity. For many, some degree of second language acquisition has been a necessity since Babel. One task of a new discipline would be to reexamine the history of foreign language instruction—including its intimate connection with classical rhetoric and its role in Western discourse education—with an emphasis on its accomplishments and a judicious understanding of its failures and limitations. In so doing, perhaps we too can discover a usable past.

Those present at the birth of the new discipline may remember it as taking place at the CCCC meeting of 1963, but its institutionalization in English departments and the professionalization of its practitioners could make only slow headway until the seventies. Until very late in the sixties, the atmosphere in English departments was one of elitism toward a surfeit of baby-boom students, the continuing prestige of the New Criticism, the popularity of literature courses with undergraduates, and an expansion in the size and number of graduate programs to meet the faculty shortage prevailing at the time. All these factors militated against the acceptance of rhetoric and composition as a discipline within English studies, so that Kinneavy's words cited earlier still described the situation accurately when they were first published in 1971.

In the seventies, a number of factors came together to create an atmosphere favorable to the new discipline. Starting in the 1969-70 hiring season, PhDs in English began to be in oversupply (Bloland & Bloland, 101), and that condition became more severe as the decade

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progressed. In the freewheeling late sixties and early seventies, high school students were allowed to substitute "soft" electives for "hard" traditional English courses, and their writing skills suffered accordingly. Two-year colleges and university open-admissions policies, the latter most visibly at the City University of New York, brought to postsecondary education students with limited literacy and severe remedial writing problems that "teachers trained to analyze the belletristic achievements of the centuries" were ill-equipped to handle (Shaughnessy, 1-3).

The prolonged decline in student writing abilities and average verbal SAT scores led to a public perception of a literacy crisis among the young, a perception culminating, in late 1975, in a cover story in *Newsweek* on "Why Johnny Can't Write" (Shiels). In sum, while sound intrinsic grounds for a modern discipline of written discourse have always existed, its institutionalization was abetted because English studies were in disarray. In a process that foreign language professionals may find familiar, a tendency existed to call in the rhetoricians, including specialists in English education, as a sort of pedagogical fire brigade. As we will see, at a different point in the cycle the same forces will be operating in reverse.

In the conditions of the seventies, then, the new discipline thrived. Graduate departments that ignored the trend found their new PhDs unhired. Those with well-known rhetoric scholars did better, as did those with a reputation for preparing their candidates to teach the new breed of student. Graduate students sensed the new trend and sought to augment their vitas with evidence of experience and work in the new rhetoric and in remedial reading and writing (cf. Bramer, 30-33).

Many English departments have developed a popular new program of study in technical communication (also called professional rhetoric) that qualifies its graduates for jobs outside of teaching. In the age of the information revolution, this new applied field has been described as concerning itself with improving "our methods of . . . making information usable for a specific audience" (Whitburn, 226). Technical communication has become an academic and occupational specialty in its own right, with two professional associations, one annual convention, three journals, a generous

inclusion of papers at the annual meetings of the CCCC and MLA, and articles on the subject finding their way into general composition journals as well.

From modest beginnings in 1949, the CCCC has grown into a large and vigorous professional association with a prestigious journal and an exciting and well-attended annual conference. According to my analysis of the 1986 program (NCTE), the meeting that year listed over 1,500 program participants in various capacities, of whom almost 700 were speakers at the 236 concurrent sessions. There is nothing of comparable size and concentration of focus in foreign languages. By way of random comparison, the 1984 joint meeting of ACTFL, AATF, AATG, the Chinese Language Teachers Association, and assorted smaller councils and associations listed approximately 500 program participants in the nonliterary sessions and workshops, of whom 352 were presenters at 156 nonliterary concurrent sessions at which presentations were made (ACTFL). The joint foreign language meeting represented three languages and American foreign language instruction at all levels, including its organizational and administrative infrastructure; the CCCC meeting was restricted to research in written discourse and to teaching writing at the college level. Given the greater subject scope of foreign language meetings, the huge population of composition teachers alone cannot account for the greater size of composition conferences. The reason must lie in the definition of rhetoric and composition as a discipline, the resulting greater professionalization, and what must be a concomitant higher level of morale.

Foreign language professionals—attuned to mutually unintelligible linguistic codes and accustomed to thinking of writing as one of the four language skills—would be inclined to imagine composition scholarship as research in linguistics and stylistics on the one hand and educational research on how to help learners achieve these stylistic norms on the other. We would expect composition, like Teschner's applied and educational linguistics, to be located in the overlap between linguistics and education. The discipline of rhetoric and composition has indeed generated and applied some relevant linguistic research on subjects such as syntactic fluency and coherence and cohesion. Educationists have also produced a body of highly

regarded research, including James Moffett's *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, *The Development of Writing Abilities* (11-18) by James Britton et al., and Janet Emig's *The Writing Process of Twelfth Graders*. But in addition to linguistic research and empirical education scholarship, the discipline has carved out a number of research areas of its own. One of these is the writing process, including protocol and ethnographic research on the writing processes of experienced versus novice writers; another is rhetorical theory and rhetoric, classical and new, which addresses the aims and uses of written discourse and the role of audience. Still another is technical communication.

Two aspects of composition research recommend themselves in particular to a foreign language discipline. One is the publication of a number of ambitious book-length studies that have attempted comprehensive taxonomies, theories, and philosophies of written discourse. The philosophy was addressed by E. D. Hirsch's *The Philosophy of Composition*, the theory by Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse*, and the taxonomy by Britton's and Moffett's works mentioned above. For extraneous reasons, the books of Hirsch, Kinneavy, and Moffett have not received the attention they deserve. What is important for a foreign language discipline is that admirable attempts have been made to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework for rhetoric and composition. The foreign language field has seen many book-length studies of second-language teaching and learning, but I am unaware of any attempt to construct a comprehensive theory or philosophy of foreign languages. Such a theoretical and philosophical base is a major desideratum for a new discipline.

The second imitable direction concerns writing in the work place. Best exemplified by the collection *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* (Odell & Goswami), this area of research examines the writing done by the college-educated work force in government, corporate organizations, and the professions. If foreign languages are to be constituted as an autonomous discipline rather than a specialty for educationists, we need to examine communication across language barriers in the world beyond the classroom.

Over the last quarter century, rhetoric and composition has gradually been able to create adequate publication outlets for its practi-

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tioners. When CCCC came into being in 1949, one of the first items on the agenda was the founding of a new journal, which eventually became the respected quarterly *College Composition and Communication*. *College English*—published by the College Section of NCTE and mainly a journal in literature in the fifties and early sixties—is now a journal in which articles on composition predominate, though it has recently taken to publishing slightly more articles on issues concerning the teaching of literature at the undergraduate level.³ The number of composition journals has swelled to the point where, according to my analysis of a 1986 list (Anson), thirty journals (not counting newsletters) are devoted entirely or predominantly to research and writing on written discourse. Of these, three are pedagogical, focusing on practical classroom applications (e.g., *Exercise Exchange*), and fourteen address a wide range of more specialized areas (e.g., *Journal of Advanced Composition*, a journal with a pedagogical base of a single course!). The remaining thirteen could be classified, with some reservations, as general.

By contrast, the publication outlets for the language component of foreign languages are thin indeed, with only two general journals of multilingual emphasis in the United States: *The Modern Language Journal* and *Foreign Language Annals*. To these one must add the *ADFL Bulletin* with its solicited articles and program descriptions, and the two special-focus journals *NALLD Journal* and *Calico Journal*. A cursory survey of recent numbers of *The French Review* showed a proportion of seventy-three percent of articles on literature compared to twenty-seven percent on language. *Hispania* showed fifty-one percent of articles on literature and theoretical linguistics and forty-nine percent on applied linguistics and pedagogy. The AATG publishes *The German Quarterly*, devoted to literary scholarship, and the semiannual *Unterrichtspraxis* on the teaching of both language and literature.⁴ *Second Language Acquisition* and *Language Learning* are substantially journals in ESL, and few of the contributors appear to be affiliated with foreign language departments.

Perhaps this paucity of journal outlets explains the tendency in the foreign language profession to rely so heavily on edited collections. A case in point is a 1985 *Modern Language Journal* article on the much-discussed topic of oral-

proficiency testing. Of the thirty-seven sources cited, two are unpublished papers; eight are books and book-length reports, five of which are cited as theoretical authority; two are articles in proceeding books or serials; eighteen are articles in edited collections; and only seven are journal articles (Lantolf & Frawley, 344-45).

In English studies, seven journals, all published by NCTE, deserve special mention. As the journal of CCCC, *College Composition and Communication* is the journal most associated with the discipline of rhetoric and composition and an example of how a professional association can found a journal to formalize a given body of knowledge as a discipline (Connors, 353-54). As we have seen, this formalization was a gradual process over three decades. *College English* retains MLA citation style; its essays on composition as well as literature stand "squarely in the humanities tradition of knowledge gained through reasoned discourse. It does not publish essays on techniques, skills, or pedagogical practices divorced from larger issues and meanings" (353). The discipline of rhetoric and composition was founded by members of college English departments with graduate training in literature, and most of its publication outlets have been hospitable to persons with traditional humanist habits of mind. A foreign language discipline must be similarly hospitable if it is to be institutionalized in college departments of foreign languages and literatures.

Teaching English in the Two-Year College addresses its portion of the NCTE constituency. *Research in the Teaching of English* is a forum for careful empirical research on teaching English at all educational levels. It uses APA citation style, has moved increasingly toward the rigor of research in the social sciences, and "simply has no truck with unsupported assertion" (Connors, 356). Like *English Education*, it is primarily a venue for educationists. Two other journals, not included in the thirty mentioned above, are *English Journal* at the secondary and *Language Arts* at the primary level. These journals are for English educationists and classroom teachers at their respective levels.

The journals published by NCTE are evidence of its successful policy of preventing the fragmentation that Benseler (144-51) has identified as plaguing our professional associations

in foreign languages. Though NCTE does not have to cope with fragmentation by language, it has been able to prevent fragmentation by type of institution (two-year or four-year college), instructional level, or professional orientation as literarian, rhetorician, educationist, or classroom teacher. The joint membership in NCTE and CCCC agreed upon in 1949 is now expressed in NCTE's policy of offering a basic NCTE membership for \$35 and a subscription to *College Composition and Communication* for an additional \$12. Membership mailings to college faculty also offer NCTE members *English Education* for \$12 and *Teaching English in the Two-Year College and Research in the Teaching of English* for \$15 each. With CCCC providing a large college-level meeting for writing specialists and an NCTE meeting for teachers at all levels, and with the entire range of journals offered at a small additional cost over the basic membership, there is little incentive to found competing associations. Such a policy recommends itself as a model for realizing Benseler's still unimplemented proposal for an American Language Association.

More specifically, a need exists for an association devoted to the language component of foreign language studies at the college level. Benseler has rightly noted (145) that the structure and emphases of ACTFL tend to discourage interest in the organization on the part of members of college foreign language departments. Perhaps a college association joinable only through membership in ACTFL would benefit the parent organization the way CCCC helped to swell the rolls of NCTE.

An important pattern emerges from our examination. Rhetoric and composition—through its own professional association, its annual meeting, the research areas it has carved out, and the publication outlets it has created—has formalized itself as a discipline and added a level of professionalism *in addition to* the discipline of English education. In foreign languages, the creation of an additional level of professionalization in all four areas is needed if a discipline is to be constituted and institutionalized in college departments.

With the organizational support of the CCCC, its journal and its annual convention, the writing discipline in English departments has continued to flourish into the eighties, so that Maxine Hairston could observe in her

presidential address at the 1985 conference that "membership in CCCC and attendance at conventions" were "at an all-time high," and that there were "at least a dozen nationally recognized graduate programs granting degrees in rhetoric and composition," with more being added every year (272). Hairston severely underestimated the total. According to a 1986 survey to which 123 of the 139 doctoral English departments in the country responded, forty-two departments were offering doctorates in rhetoric and composition, with an additional seven departments planning to add such programs (Huber, 36). In addition, a number of established graduate departments have begun to offer work in the new discipline as a minor within a more traditional doctoral program in English (Hartzog, 42). Hairston also noted that the job market for faculty in the new discipline was "excellent" (272). Her assessment is borne out by subsequent reports. In the 1985-86 hiring season, eighteen percent of advertised job openings in English were in rhetoric and composition (Heller, 15). By the 1986-87 season, the proportion had risen to twenty-five percent (Franklin, 4).

The gains Hairston cites have not been made without opposition, expressed most recently as a retreat from commitment to the new discipline and as outright backlash in some very visible quarters. The retreat from earlier high levels of commitment has been abetted by the conservative atmosphere in American education during the eighties. Entering freshmen now come to college better prepared and with a full complement of "hard" English courses under their belts; students are no longer restive; the job shortage for faculty has eased slightly and promises to ease still more; much talk focuses on reemphasizing general education and restoring a core curriculum; and for young scholars the new literary theory in its various manifestations—feminist, reader-response, poststructuralist—is opening research opportunities in literature that had been drying up during the reign of the New Criticism. From this perspective, all seems to be well; English is no longer in trouble; the fires have been put out; the pedagogical fire brigade of rhetoricians can be sent back to languish uncalled in the firehouse. We have evidence of a similar trend in attitudes toward language people in their departments.⁵

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In her presidential address to the CCCC, Hairston brought the issue of backlash against the new discipline among literature faculty into the open, and in such a frank and impassioned manner that she received a standing ovation from her audience (Schilb, 5). She noted the arrogance of literarians in refusing to recognize rhetoric and composition as a discipline. She also reminded her audience that the literary establishment in English departments was dependent on large enrollments in writing courses for its very existence (Hairston, 275-76). If equality of recognition was not forthcoming soon, she recommended that rhetoricians petition their administrations to form separate departments (280-81). On behalf of rhetoricians, then, Hairston issued an ultimatum to literature faculty: either we stay as equals or we leave and take our enrollments with us. Secession from literature-dominated English departments, an option considered and taken by persons in speech and rhetoric starting in 1914, was now being openly considered for rhetoricians.

The threat of secession immediately got the attention of literarians in English studies, most visibly in the form of polemics on the part of a group of politically active and strategically affiliated younger scholars who comprise a discernible poststructuralist network. David Shumway attacked Hairston at great length in a self-avowedly political article titled "A Unified-Field Theory of English." Arguing that the theoretical base of rhetoric and composition is too unsound to support a discipline, Shumway proposes uniting poststructuralist literary theory and composition theory—and thereby the discipline of literature and the field of composition—under the umbrella of the former. The same line of attack, under cover of "uniting" rhetorical theory and literary theory, was also evident at the 1985 MLA convention, where John Schilb delivered a paper containing a lengthy attack on Hairston. The titles of

a number of sessions and papers at the 1986 convention also appear to be evidence of a backlash against rhetoric and composition.⁶

In short, the present picture is mixed. At the very 1985 and 1986 conventions where Hairston was attacked and the poststructuralists were so active, rhetoricians were commanding eighteen and twenty-five percent of the job market respectively. If the discipline can survive the threats to its autonomy posed by the poststructuralists, if it can survive the attempts to "unite" it with literary studies, it appears to have a bright future. Rhetoricians have reason to be optimistic. Graduate programs and faculty lines have a momentum and palpable reality even poststructuralists can't deconstruct.

The example of rhetoricians in departments of English demonstrates that it is indeed possible to institutionalize a language discipline within existing departments of foreign languages and literatures. The successes of rhetoric and composition are impressive compared to the situation in foreign languages. Not only has the discipline become the largest specialty in English studies for new PhDs; rhetoricians have achieved a new self-definition, respectability, and pride. There were almost fifty doctoral programs at last count, and graduate work in the field is also accepted as a minor within traditional programs in literature. Rhetoricians already in the profession are being tenured and promoted on the basis of publications in one of thirty available journals. All this invites emulation.

But the most important lesson of the rise of rhetoric and composition is this: if the acquisition and use of the written form of the native language for learning, persuasion, and transmitting information is a subject matter worthy of a discipline, then a subject that addresses the central anthropological fact of polylinguality—mankind's division into speakers of many mutually unintelligible languages—is no less worthy. Babel antedates even Aristotle.

NOTES

¹In the *MLA Newsletter* (18, iii [1986]), the word *field* occurs nine times when the language component of foreign languages and literatures is the referent. In no case is the word used as a second reference for *discipline*, which does

not occur as a referent for foreign languages. *Field* appears to represent the agreed-upon terminology of the MLA. In the same issue, the headline of a story on Richard Lambert's 1986 Aspen conference referred to it as a "Conference on Foreign Language Pedagogy" (10). Both terms connote a lack of recognition for the language component of foreign languages and literatures.

²Following Shumway, I use the term *literarian* as a useful

one-word designation for someone who professes the discipline of literature.

³Based on my analysis of six volumes of *College English* published during the fifties and early sixties and the volumes for 1984 and 1985.

⁴Based on my retrospective survey of ten issues each of *The French Review*, starting with 60, vi, and *Hispania*, starting with 70, ii (both May 1987). The Fall 1987 issue of *Unterrichtspraxis* (20, ii) was a special issue devoted to the teaching of literature. In 1981, then editor Renate Schulz (159) noted that three earlier issues had a special focus on teaching literature, while one focused on women's studies. Otherwise, the journal has recently carried only one or two articles per issue on the teaching of literature.

⁵In 1985, the MLA Commission on Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics convened a conference attended by sixty-two representatives from forty-five graduate departments. The conference prefaced all its recommenda-

tions with a ringing resolution defining foreign language departments as belonging to the humanities in the narrowest sense as "those disciplines concerned with the reading and interpretation of literary texts and cultural artifacts." The resolution went on to state that "oppositions between the study of language and literature, between scholarship and pedagogy, are essentially untenable" (MLA Commission, 1). This resolution is clearly aimed at the curricular innovations and attempts to redefine the field developed in response to the precipitous decline in enrollments during the seventies.

⁶E.g., the session on "Poststructuralist Perspectives on Composition Theory," which included a paper by Schilb on "The Lesson of Paul de Man for the Reading of Composition Theory," one by John Clifford on "Lentricchia's Burke and the Burke of Composition Studies," and one by C. H. Knoblauch on "Foucault, Discursive Practice, and Writing in the Discipline" (MLA, 1989).

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28. ———. "E.g., the session on 'Poststructuralist Perspectives on Composition Theory,' which included a paper by Schilb on 'The Lesson of Paul de Man for the Reading of Composition Theory,' one by John Clifford on 'Lentricchia's Burke and the Burke of Composition Studies,' and one by C. H. Knoblauch on 'Foucault, Discursive Practice, and Writing in the Discipline' (MLA, 1989).

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