

**SCRIBBLING VS. WRITING; THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERATURE IN WRITING: IN DEFENSE OF LITERATURE IN FYC****Beyazıt H. AKMAN<sup>1</sup>****Abstract**

*Since the emergence of rhetoric and composition studies within the English departments as unique entities, the place of literature in the teaching of writing to university students has been put to debate. After the consolidation of composition studies and related fields in the following years, the debate continued with more fervor towards the bifurcation of literature and writing. Finally in the last couple of decades, there has been a lot of controversy regarding the elimination of literature and literary studies from the writing classroom. From Gerald Graff to David Bartholomae, from Peter Elbow to Gary Olson, lots of critics and scholars have articulated their perspectives on the issue. This article is a modest attempt to make contribution to this debate in defense of literature in the teaching of writing. While making an overview of the most prominent views on the subject, I discuss pros and cons of each view with a comparative perspective and list major differences between the teaching of writing with and without literature.*

**Keywords:** *Literature and writing, rhetoric and composition, comparative studies, literature and pedagogy*

**KARALAMAK MI, YAZMAK MI? ÜNİVERSİTEDE KOMPOZİSYON ÖĞRETİMİNDE EDEBİYATIN YERİ VE ÖNEMİ: BİRİNCİ SINIF YAZI BECERİLERİ EĞİTİMİ DERSLERİNDE EDEBİYATI SAVUNMAK ÜZERİNE****Öz**

*İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı bölümlerinde retorik ve kompozisyon çalışmalarının ortaya çıkışıyla birlikte, kompozisyon ve yazı becerilerini geliştirme derslerinde edebiyatın yeri çokça sorgulanmaya başlamıştır. İlerleyen yıllarda kompozisyon çalışmaları ve ilgili alanların yerinin sabitleşmesiyle de bu tartışma edebiyat ve kompozisyon arasındaki ayrımı daha da derinleştirecek şekilde devam etmiştir. Son olarak, geçtiğimiz birkaç on yılda, her türlü edebiyat çalışmalarının, kompozisyon öğretiminden elimine edilmesine yönelik bir durum ortaya çıkmıştır. Gerald Graff'tan David Bartholomae'ye, Peter Elbow'dan Gary Olson'a kadar pek çok araştırmacı ve teorisyen*

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*konuyla ilgili görüşlerini ortaya koymuşlardır. Bu makale, işte bu tartışmada edebiyatın savunulmasına dair mütevazı bir katkı yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Konuyla ilgili önde gelen belli başlı görüşler sunulurken bu görüşlerin olumlu ve olumsuz yanları irdelenmekte, kompozisyon derslerinin edebiyatlı ve edebiyatsız öğretimi arasındaki farklar sıralanmaktadır.*

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Edebiyat ve kompozisyon, retorik ve kompozisyon, karşılaştırmaları araştırmalar, edebiyat ve pedagoji*

### **Introduction**

Within the English departments, there has been a lot of conflict between literary studies and composition. It was no coincidence that in "Organizing the Conflicts in the Curriculum," Gerald Graff showed the debate around composition and literature courses as the leading topic to be discussed at a series of symposia he suggested for the future of English departments (1992: 72). The divide between composition classrooms and literature widened over the years. The increasing tendency of the separation of the writing programs from English departments in the United States and abroad, a practice which has become more prominent and popular after Syracuse University (Zebroski, 2002: 164), has not only divided the departments of literature and writing, but also alienated writing courses away from literary texts. Furthermore, it seems that composition studies have successfully turned this bifurcation into a tradition. Twenty-five years ago, Gary Tate wrote, "The presence of literature-fiction, poetry, drama-in freshman composition courses in 1992 is minimal" (1993: 317). Nowadays, it goes without saying that first-year composition (FYC from now on) should keep away from literature so much so that any counter-argument is naturally positioned as a defense.

As such, in this paper I will try to address why most composition and rhetoric scholars argue for a kind of writing which at best resists the dominance of literary texts in FYC, and at worst eliminates all literary texts in the teaching of writing. I will analyze these differing perspectives to be able to clearly see the assumptions on reading (literature)<sup>2</sup> and ultimately conclude by emphasizing not only that literature should not be left out of composition classrooms, but also how composition should benefit from literary texts in

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<sup>2</sup> In this article I use "reading" mostly in the sense of "reading literature," not including reading reports or data or other non-literary texts.

classroom practices. It will be shown that writing is naturally, practically, and theoretically inseparable from reading, and that reading is unimaginable without literature, as many other scholars argue.

I will first start by those, who are in favor of unity, rather than fragmentation of the related disciplines. "The bifurcation of rhetoric and poetic must end," states Gary Olson while summarizing James Berlin, "we must come to understand the discipline's main objective to be the examination of discursive practices in both the *production* and *consumption* of a text" (emphasis mine, 2002: 84). To be able to create students who can truly become agents; who can truly participate in the democratic system, what Berlin proposes requires not the separation but peace between the disciplines of writing and literature. Drawing on qualitative research conducted at the University of Michigan, in "Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom" (2013), Michael Bunn also emphasizes the interconnected nature of reading and writing activities and demonstrates that when they are applied together, they create more effective and successful results.

Otherwise, the conventional means of teaching composition (with little or no literature) is in harmony with the state and industry-military complex of the corporate university (especially in the American context), a structure, as Foucauldian analysis shows, which shapes, conditions and manipulates the discursive practices of the writing classroom. To be able to oppose the ways of representation of this Ideology, not only the student but also the teacher should first and foremost learn how to *read* these representations critically. It is also true that "The humanities are under attack," and "the pressures on English departments—and the humanities in general" are increasing every day with regards to their functions in the overall higher education system (Bowen and O'Driscoll, 2013: 73; 59). Therefore, it is an important question to be answered if rhetoric and composition studies coopt the material powers that try to do away with "literary" studies.

Olson demonstrates, after all, composition classes should be much more than teaching students "to express themselves clearly." "It's about helping them learn to engage in ideological critique so that the language skills they acquire are relevant not only to their lives but also to their material existence" (2002: 82). That is why an inter-disciplinary, reciprocal interaction and discourse should be prioritized with respect to composition and critical writing; cultural

studies, critical literacy studies, post-colonial studies, comparative studies, etc. should all be viewed as parts of a big puzzle that also includes composition as one of its natural components. Only then, once again with a Foucauldian sense, the true nature of the dominant Discourse of the Ideology can be made visible. Critical thinking and writing first and foremost requires the ability to read the text critically.

In "Composition and Rhetoric, Inc." Zebroski demonstrates how these issues of "professionalization," "departmentalization," and "entrepreneurialism" are based on and fed by the capitalist economic system at its worst, or they are a reflection of the larger social framework which situates the academy, at its best. Zebroski especially indicates how the post-Fordist economic system of departmentalization underlines (and maybe underlies too) the context of these intellectual enterprises, which also fits into the most recent cultural logic of late capitalism; postmodernity, as is indicated by Frederick Jameson, in his seminal work, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Ultimately, the big question is, of course, whether the bifurcation of writing studies and English adds up to this cultural logic, a system which has mostly been co-opted by the Ideology itself or whether it activates critical thinking and Ideological critique.

Why then, one can ask, do composition and rhetoric scholars try to highlight the disciplinary status of writing? What are some of the reasons which make these scholars look down on not only literary texts in composition classrooms but also on the field of literature in its entirety? One such scholar is Kopelson, who in her article, persistently explains the reasons of why more and more graduate students of English switch to composition studies because the field's promising immediateness and its "realistic" concerns enable composition to offer something "tangible" in terms of both purpose and outcome (2008: 758-59). One of the students who are quoted to celebrate composition as superior to the field of literature indicates he never felt the same joy while he was studying Wordsworth, Coleridge or Blake (2008: 750-751). In the majority of the article, this comparison between literature and composition is clearly visible; especially when the new "converts" outcry their pleasure in composition studies and defy literature as a study of "dead poets and writers," a study which, for them, has nothing to do with the rest of the world.

Erika Lindemann expresses similar thoughts on “the dead-end” of literature in composition classroom albeit from a different perspective: “[L]iterature-based courses, even most essay-based courses, focus on consuming texts, not producing them” (1993: 313). There are three major assumptions in both Kopelson and Lindemann. First of all, they reinforce the binary between reading and writing by depicting reading as an act of self-serving, mission-lacking, selfish activity whereas associating writing with immediate outcomes and its effective results in the society. Kopelson also reduces the reading and studying of literary texts to Romantic poets, and literature to dead writers. We are also supposed to prioritize immediate outcomes of teaching to, let’s say, not so immediate results of academic research. It is taken for granted in her analysis that teaching gives much more pleasure than research, which then creates another age-old dichotomy of research and teaching. However, Horner indicates, from a cultural-materialistic perspective, that there is no inherent value in preferring exchange value over use value:

If the dominant recognizes only the exchange value of classroom work, we should not perpetuate that tendency by denying the potential use value of that work as well. And in fact, so long as the only alternative to valuing that work for its economic capitalization (as skills instructions, say) is seen as its aesthetication, we have simply traded in one commodification of composition for another: economic for cultural capital, skills for art (2000: 241).

That is to say, philosophically and materialistically speaking, there is no inherent meaning or justification of Kopelson’s championing use value. From this perspective, we can even argue that Kopelson’s argument is more in harmony with the hegemonic structure of capitalism, as a work starts to be commodified, Horner indicates, when it is evaluated by its outcomes; a most basic profit-seeking approach. Leaving aside the debate between Gerald Graff and John Rouse on the “the politics of composition,”<sup>3</sup> all parties can at least agree that critical thinking requires critical reading skills.

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<sup>3</sup> See Rouse, J. (1979), “The Politics of Composition,” *College English*, Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 1-12 and Graff, G. (1980), “The Politics of Composition: A Reply to John Rouse,” *College English*, Vol. 41, No. 8, pp. 851-856. Criticizing and analyzing the role of composition classrooms in reinforcing the status quo, Rouse states, “A composition program, then, can help produce a personality type acceptable to those who would maintain things as they are, who already have power” (11). In response to Rouse, Graff argues that “the conception of good writing that guides the standard

The materialist profit-seeking approach is most problematic given the fact that the tradition of ideological critique is an inseparable part of composition studies, a notion which is also indicated in the same article by Kopelson (2008: 760). Here, Olson is quoted to indicate the mission of composition studies to liberate individuals from the (American) capitalistic grip, which brings us to another vital assumption in the article, that writing (without literature) is more emancipating than writing with, or let's be more fair, writing *about* literature. To be able to understand the contradictory nature of this premise we need to have a brief sketch of how in the last forty years or so composition classrooms have been multiplied unprecedentedly, with an ever-increasing emphasis on the study of rhetoric, as Crowley's historical sketch puts in front of us:

The characteristics of the post-world war II era and the baby boom in the 70's, with the democratization of the university led more and more people to get registered to universities –without enough background in the kind of skills necessary to perform successfully at college, skills headed by writing. What followed is the familiar story of how composition classrooms turned into places where incoming “unrefined” students were taught the skills of effective communication in writing. These people did not necessarily want to be literary critics, poets or novelists, but they wanted to have decent jobs mostly in engineering, business, government, law, medicine, etc. As such, the mission of the composition classrooms should not be to teach Shakespeare or Victor Hugo but effective means of persuasion; the skill to be able to write in a variety of situations taking into consideration the whys, whos and hows of the writing situation, in other words, the purpose, audience, and forum of writing, which thus has championed the rhetorical approach.

“What was waiting to replace literature,” Gary Tate states harshly, “was rhetoric, supported since the 1960s by the Rhetoric Police, that hardy band of zealots who not many years hence were to become the dreaded enforcement arm of the Conference on College Composition and Communication.” He then reminds sarcastically how the first years of rhetoric domination has subsumed other interests: “Pity the innocent young (or old) teacher in those days who tried to read a CCCC convention paper that did not contain a

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composition course is little more than the rhetorical and grammatical complement of capitalism” has now become a “cliché” that misleads teachers of writing (851-2).

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reference to Aristotle or the word 'invention.' (A current analogy might be a person today who does not in her paper refer to, at least, collaboration, hegemony, and community)" (1993: 318). He further adds that "the situation changed so quickly and so completely" that in 1969, when he "tried to find current articles on composition and literature to include in *Teaching High School Composition*," he was hardly able to do so.

This historical overview should remind us of several important things. As Horner indicates gravely, having immediate technical outcomes and having visible goals and outcomes in writing may not be the best anti-hegemonic move or the most effective way to teach critical thinking skills that are most needed by incoming freshmen. Otherwise, it is actually the perfect way that reinforces unquestioning individuals within the capitalistic, hegemonic system. Kopelson's "new converts" are therefore too quick to celebrate their newly-found practice, which is so "down to earth," by denouncing their affiliation with literature. Yes, we may very well get happy by teaching effective "writing" skills so that the students perform better both in their other classes and in the rest of their careers, but how happy should we really be when we feed the system with the next generation of business executives, CEOs, insurance agents, government officers, or a multiplicity of occupations which are based on the most mechanical effective skills of scribbling, not even *writing*? Doesn't this bunch of professions look as "scribes," producers of copy-cat writings? As Guillory states, "it is rhetoric and composition, not literary study, that have arisen to meet 'the task of providing the future technobureaucratic elite with precisely and only the linguistic competence necessary for the performance of its specialized function'" (as cited in Graff, 2007: xi)<sup>4</sup>. No question the outcomes are more visible.

"Instead of imagination, we now have 'inventive procedures' such as cubing, looping, and brainstorming," Tate compares. "Cubing and looping and brainstorming are sometimes useful pedagogical devices, but to assume, as many seem to do, that inventive procedures or the plotting of cognitive strategies do more than scratch the surface of the human mind thinking and imagining is to trivialize the creative act of composing" (1993: 318).

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<sup>4</sup> Graff, however, argues, "But such a description underestimates the scope of composition and literature programs and of the skills valued 'the future technobureaucratic elite'" (2007: xi).

At the heart of this essay, at this point, three main differences will be listed between what can be defined as scribbling and writing. Here it can clearly be seen how each one leads to the other naturally, therefore demonstrating that reading is inseparable from *writing*:

1. Scribbling is about the expression of the self. Writing is not only about the expression of the self but also is the definition, deconstruction, and creation of that self.
2. Scribbling serves disciplines and the university as an industrial state complex. Writing serves the writer, the reader, and the society, by trying to emancipate all.
3. Scribbling disavows all sorts of connection to reading, especially literature. Writing welcomes all reading practices as production of a text is built on consumption of other texts.

We can thus say that writing without an eye on the effective skills of reading is damaging to the very nature and mission of “writing.” To be able to explain this better, I will now turn into the famous Bartholomae/Elbow debate, in which the former argues that the teaching of writing, especially what we call as “academic writing,” should incorporate the reading of texts whereas the latter can be aligned with Kopelson in terms of his “emancipating” and “liberating” practices of writing in which he suggests we should not base our writing practices on readings. Bartholomae is also famous for his course books about writing, which incorporate an abundance of reading material ranging from famous essayists, to short fiction, to chapters in novels and other forms of writing. Whereas he emphasizes the value of collected wisdom, the potential of previous intellectual productions, and thus the importance of even the canon to teach the genre of academic writing, a genre which is highly dependent on the acknowledgement of previous writers and texts, Elbow believes in a much more individualist, inspirational, and experimental mode of writing, in which students should feel free from the “giants” (work of published authors). As such, it’s also clear how Elbow aligns “reading” with literature.

As Horner states, Elbow’s position denies the material, social, and the historical which functions both in and outside the classroom, both in and outside student’s consciousness. “Instead,” Horner demonstrates, “the classroom experience, and the teacher and writer, are redefined as free-floating, privileged sites discrete from material contingencies of the curriculum. [. . .] The pedagogical commodity is touted for its ‘removal of any intrusion of these into the classroom’ (2000: 42). This is to say that creating a free-floating purpose, a most

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imaginary discursive practice, would be incapable of confronting and resisting the dominant Ideology as such an Ideology is never introduced nor engaged with in the classroom. Such practices, then, cannot get into dialogue with their environment contextually, diachronically and synchronically. Bartholomae's position, however, is based on an alliance between reading and writing. We know that almost all of the literary theories are based on a *close reading* of the text. It is called a 'close' reading because it is not enough to 'read' it, but you need to be careful and 'close' enough to be able to decode the meaning(s) of the text. More than anything else, the postmodern deconstructivist theory shows us that every text can be deconstructed in a different way, regardless of the intention of the writer. Only after a careful engagement with the text, the reader can grasp the messages, go beyond the surface of letters, and challenge the dominant discourse in the text. The point is that reading is not a passive act of going over the lines and understanding the meaning of the words and sentences. Rather, reading is an active participation in the creation of meaning out of the text in front of our eyes. It is not about sentences or words, but about ideas and thoughts and feelings, and thus anything else. As such, reading is a form of writing; writing the meaning(s) of the text. That's to say, if writing is construction, reading is deconstruction, and it is obvious that these acts are in an organic, inherent, reciprocal relationship to one another. The ability to 'read' requires the ability 'write' and vice versa. Denying the interactive nature of these notions is to deny the true nature of writing. Michael Bunn's research at University of Michigan supports these observations. Sharing the results of his survey, Bunn states, "Nearly 100 percent of instructors who completed the online survey (56 of 57) report that they conceptualize reading and writing as connected activities" (2013: 501).

Writing without reading (and here I exclusively mean without *literature*) is too mechanical and robotic an act, or if you will, a passive mode in service of the Anglo-American cultural hegemony. Writing doesn't require literary texts only if we define writing as a form of fact-listing, or reporting, or note taking—abilities which are indeed prioritized in today's utilitarian university, geared towards creating man labor to the engines of the economy. But, isn't writing, the true definition of it, much more than a proper organization of data or facts? Neither writing nor reading can be thought in isolation from the figurative power of language, the metaphorical aspects of lexicon and after all mostly indefinable, unmathematical

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characteristics of meaning, unless one aims at creating effective business reports. "Whatever our motives," Tate states gravely pointing out to this fact, "I fear that more and more we are primarily interested in shaping and fitting students to perform their appointed tasks as good little workers in the various artificial-and some would say oppressive-academic/administrative divisions that constitute the modern American university" (1993: 320). The point is that a writing classroom without any piece of reading (and integrating reading without any literary samples), to model, to have a look at, to analyze, to get inspired by, to look up to or simply to read to enjoy is bound to be in the service of the labor industry. True, writing *is* writing (not reading) in a Kafkaesque world of bureaucracy and paperwork, a world devoid of imagination, creativity, and inspiration.

It's also true that reading dead poets may not create immediate outcomes as Kopelson's converts desire, but it can provide the student with a discourse outside the sphere of the capitalistic grip; Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" can hint at the beauty of the mystique, Wordsworth's "The World is too much with Us" can show us how a utilitarian life perspective is destroying the universe, and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" can show more deeply about the human condition, something which a classroom devoted to the service of other disciplines cannot do (and no I am not using the word 'service' as a derogatory noun, rather my point is to argue that composition should realize its value with a coordination with literature, rather than only aiming at creating manpower for other disciplines.) Even the reduction of reading to reading Romantic poets may be a powerful tool in a composition classroom if used properly.

This attempt to persuade writing scholars to use literature in FYC comes out somewhat perplexing-even ridiculous-given other departments' growing interest in many literary genres. Harry Garvin notes interestingly:

Professors all over the campus are beginning to use novels in their courses. In the departments of religion, sociology, philosophy, political science, psychology, history, and economics, professors have discovered that novels often help them and their students to see into the generalizations and facts of their disciplines. Ironically, departments of English generally seem to ignore novels in teaching freshman composition. (1959: 175)

But what kind of novels, what kind of literature? At this point, by integrating Crowley's strong argument against the canon, I will try

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to problematize the perceptions of reading and literature. One of the essential points Crowley is making is the fact that departments of English have long been dominated by a humanistic approach (1998: 13). She defines this approach as teaching English (literature) with the ultimate aim to cultivate 'culture' in students, thus creating the universal (Renaissance) man, who can enjoy art and have good morals. This approach, she further argues, has led to the emergence, establishment and reification of what is called as the British canon, headed by Bible and Greek classics, Homer, Shakespeare and Milton and the like (1998: 133). To embody her argument in a much visible manner, she contextualizes the issue at one chapter around the figure of Foerster and what happened at Iowa State University (1998: 139). Foerster designed and established a two-year, twelve-credit compulsory course titled "Literature and the Art of Writing," a course which was required for every student in the college of arts and sciences. Here Crowley implies obviously and sometimes states explicitly that the writing courses in the nation started also as part of this tradition of courses which are meant to create 'cultured' individuals who are thus ready to study in the university. Ultimately, she opposes not only to this humanist approach, but also to any traces of it in the writing classroom.

I agree with Crowley that our perceptions about what we mean when we say 'reading' or 'literature' should be questioned and thus transformed into healthier and more beneficial conceptions. It is true that the canon overwrites most of the English departments, but that problem is also valid for literature classes as much as it is for composition classrooms. It would be unfair to reduce the English departments to the exclusive study of the texts mentioned; it has been an ongoing fight for a long time. As far back as in 1992, in "Organizing the Conflicts in the Curriculum," Gerald Graff concludes that "the war over the literary canon is over" and that "the next generation is going to be exposed both to the traditional canon and a new and more multicultural canon (63). The main point I thus disagree with Crowley is not the disturbing position of the canon in our classrooms but the way she equates reading with that canon. However, we can and should choose our own texts based on the specific needs of a specific classroom (thus also by not colonizing the students with an eye on the changing nature of our 'audience') and how we could manage to bypass the canon and create our own alternatives. This is also in line with Sommers's practice of chaos, which she defines as respecting and honoring students' own

purposes (as opposed to those of the instructor), by pushing them “into chaos,” back to the point where they shape and restructure their meaning (as cited in Horner, 2000: 40). Thus, neither the teacher will try to superimpose his/her purpose to the class, nor the student will have to submit to the Purpose of a class; rather the individual will learn to create his/her own purposes in line with the rhetorical situation, a synonym for the time and space emphasis of the cultural materialist critique. As Bunn indicates, “the process of reading is a *negotiation* between the knowledge and the purposes of the writer and the knowledge and purposes of the reader” (original emphasis, 2013: 501). This is not to argue for a counter-canon, which would be no worse than its anti-thesis, but for an ever-changing paradigm with respect to the students and what they need. The fact that we always change our reading material would also keep both the student and the composition instructor active and alive all the time, rather than using the same texts on and on regardless of time and space, which would be to ignore the cultural-materialistic realities of composition classrooms. While arguing for a certain type of readings to be used in the writing classroom, Bunn states what distinguishes this type of readings is that “they emphasize reading as a means to learn *about writing*, not as a means to better understand a topic, issue or worldview” (original emphasis, 2013: 506).

Different types of literature or readings can very well be argued, but what matters in this discussion is that reading is always seen as an inevitable part of writing. It is also true that reading literature on its own terms does not necessarily lead to the deconstruction of Ideology; literature can very well be used as a means of propaganda of that very Ideology. Therefore, the question is not whether to use literature or not in a writing classroom, but the awareness to use that literature towards the teaching of critical thinking, reading and writing skills. This does not change the argument that writing with literature is incomparably more effective than writing without literature in the teaching of critical writing skills of any sort.

It is true, as Elbow and partly Crowley argue, that the presence of well-written texts might discourage students to write their own pieces, which, in the face of giants, they might redeem as poor or flawed or at best nothing comparable to what they read. But isn't it also true that this discouragement can be used effectively to point out to the deficiencies in student writing, which in turn will lead to the treatment of those deficiencies, ultimately resulting in

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better forms of writing? Of course, here, once again, there is a lot the instructor needs to do before presenting the 'model' texts to assure that the students will not feel 'discouraged' but 'challenged,' and when they produce theirs, they will not be disappointed, but feel the need to revise and rewrite so that each time they feel more competent. This brings us back to the organic connection between reading, writing, and revision. After all, do we want our students to write something and then fall in love with what they have produced, in a form of over-confidence, a way of narcissism, which might very well block any hope of revision and thus 'learning'? Or rather, do we want them to realize their own deficiencies and then try to address them as self-dependent writers? Then, don't pieces of literature, even in their assumed perfection as published pieces, help us to reach this goal? Moreover, in contrast to Elbow's belief that giants frighten students, there are always ways, as many scholars argue, to demystify published authors; by introducing earlier drafts of published works, manuscripts, by including autobiographies about how it is all about hard work and dedication rather than the job of the Muse.

On the other hand, if we apply an exclusively writing approach without any reading material in it, wouldn't it be an attempt to re-invent the wheel, each single time, in every class, in the case of every student? Given the fact that we are limited by time constraints, a total of sixteen weeks in the case of Eng 101, doesn't it make much more sense to take into account, to make use of the previous wisdom which has preceded us rather than starting from scratch? Isn't denying access to an accumulation of excellent pieces of writing in a composition class is like denying access to Einstein's theory of relativity (or the atomic bomb) to a physics student?

Of course one can argue that what composition classes need are not pieces of literature but of reading, which may not be classified as 'literature.' I can only agree with this approach; as Julie Jung indicates in her emphasis of the use of multigenre texts in classrooms, we need to make sure that students do not think of 'rhetoric' as a class item such as desks or computers (I am also cautioning myself here in light of Tate's anti-rhetoric observations). Rather they should realize that rhetoric is valid in any act of writing ranging from emails to petitions, from statements of purpose to even shopping lists. So, when we reduce the reading texts to pieces of literature in composition classes, it does sterilize and create the connotation of writing and reading as sacred and profane, which

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needs to be kept only in a classroom atmosphere. That's why the use of different texts in composition classrooms is highly imperative. But, it is also important that such a practice on its own terms, if applied without any access to literary texts, would be quite damaging not only for the student but for the inherent nature of writing and thus composition. If we take it for granted that our mission is to teach chemistry students to write better chemistry papers, to teach business students better business reports, and history majors better history papers, then of course nothing makes better sense than using texts from these different genres and essays from these different disciplines to increase student's familiarity with the field. But we should also keep in mind that any literary text could do it too; why not use poetry to discuss issues of ambiguity and the importance of selection of words or simply to teach pathos? Why not use several excellent memoirs by Paul Auster or Marquez in a project about personal narratives? Why not use drama or even movie scripts to talk about the rhetorical nature of communication? Wouldn't samples of literature be a good tool in addressing issues such as sentence structure, variety, metaphor, and diction? In "Novels and Freshman Composition," Harry Garvin gives us an idea by exclusively focusing on the novels, and shares the successful practice of incorporating this genre into the writing classroom:

A novel is intended to be a work of art and not an essay; but because a good novel enlarges the student's sensibilities and imagination, it can dramatize ideas and help liberate his mind by revealing problems in their emotional complexity and can humanize his allegiances by revealing why other people have different allegiances. Novels, like all literature of power, can lead the student to explore-with excitement, understanding, and sympathy-his own ways of knowledge. (1959: 177)

In line with Garvin's emancipatory writing practices, Tate challenges the notion of writing in the disciplines approach by saying, "I refuse to look at my students as primarily history majors, accounting majors, nursing majors. I much prefer to think of them and treat them as people whose most important conversations will take place outside the academy, as they struggle to figure out how to live their lives-that is, how to vote and love and survive, how to respond to change and diversity and death and oppression and freedom" (1993: 320). As such, issues of critical thinking, responsibility and integrity, and after all being an agent of social change for the better are in the realm of writing classes as almost all

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of the composition scholars we discuss within this paper argue for. Crowley's anti-humanist mode, Elbow's experimental students, Kopelson's mission-driven converts, and Bartholomae's students on the shoulders of giants all point out to the core of writing as the emergence of unique voices, and as a path to becoming a true individual. And that is something which neither writing on its own terms nor reading business reports, an analysis of emails can do. And a student who cannot 'read' will not be able to 'write.'

### **Conclusion**

Composition, reading and therefore literature are not in opposition to one another as some scholars assume. As Bowen and O'Driscoll point out, "the old stories that literary studies and composition and rhetoric have told about themselves . . . mask the reality, and thus obstruct the steps both fields need to take in order to successfully surmount the real obstacles we all face" (2013: 58). Most composition scholars are quite hesitant in these practices with the sincere belief that literature does not necessarily lead to better writing. Yet, there is more than ample evidence such as Harry Garvin's observations that should encourage us to try similar practices: "Before the experiment began," states Garvin, "some of our instructors were apprehensive that the writing of the freshmen would suffer, despite the fact that they agreed the students would probably enjoy the novels. Our experiment has shown that freshmen at Bucknell not only find the course more interesting than before-and often even exciting-but also write better. (1959: 177).

In her definitive position against literature, Lindemann states, "One strength of our profession is our persistent effort to examine what writing courses should be and how to teach them well. Lately, these discussions have taken a more assertive turn, often depending on false dichotomies to support claims about either/or propositions" (1993: 315). Nobody would counter-argue this point, which is ironically also true for Lindemann's own against-literature-position. On the other hand, it is not the argument that reading of literature should dominate composition classrooms; I hope by this point it is evident that I would not be further away from such a position. At the core of this analysis lies the fact that more and more composition scholars are disregarding reading in writing classrooms and ignoring the potential value of literature in classrooms. What seems to some a most common-sense, eclectic approach goes on frightening many,

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thus damaging the effective and multilayered nature of writing practices.

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