LONG STRANGE TRIP: MAPPING POPULAR

CULTURE IN COMPOSITION

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LONG STRANGE TRIP: MAPPING POPULAR CULTURE IN COMPOSITION

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

LONG STRANGE TRIP: MAPPING POPULAR

CULTURE IN COMPOSITION

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Popular culture has been a continuing research and teaching interest for compositionists since the 1950s, but the focus, tone, and quality of popular culture scholarship and pedagogy have been far from consistent. In the 1960s and '70s, writing teachers turned to the popular culture studies movement for content and methods. From the late 1970s on, however, compositionists have been increasingly influenced by cultural studies in the Birmingham tradition. Throughout the late '80s and '90s, cultural studies approaches dominated the study of popular culture in composition; these approaches have benefited writing instruction, but they have had problematic results as well. We can overcome the weaknesses of cultural studies pedagogies and develop more effective writing curricula by reclaiming useful elements of popular culture studies and grounding

our appropriations from both movements in established theories and methods from rhetoric and composition studies.

This dissertation delineates historical, theoretical, political, and practical similarities and differences between cultural studies and popular culture studies and traces how these fields have influenced composition studies. I then present a hermeneutic and heuristic guide that maps three main avenues for engaging popular culture in composition based on content and practice from all three movements. *Functional* approaches are concerned with the technical and formalist methods shared by popular culture studies, cultural studies, and composition studies. *Relational* approaches, which are more common in popular culture studies, focus on the relationship between the reader and pop culture texts as well as the relationship between producer and text, with an emphasis on the affective aspects of production and consumption. *Conjunctural* approaches, based in cultural studies, pursue more comprehensive critical projects that analyze the production, distribution and consumption of texts as well as historical, cultural, and political contexts. Specific course plans and assignments illustrate each level of engagement and suggest how these approaches can be combined in a balanced composition curriculum that meets established educational outcomes, particularly those set forth by the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition."

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Style Manual Used: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th edition

Computer Software Used: Microsoft Word

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Introduction

Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me;
Other times I can barely see.
Lately it occurs to me what a long, strange trip it's been.
– The Grateful Dead, "Truckin'"

Flip through any recent composition publisher's catalogue and you will find cultural studies- and popular culture-themed textbooks and readers. Scan the session titles from any recent CCCC and you will see presentations on film, television, popular music, and other pop-culture topics related to rhetoric and composition. Enter any combination of "popular culture" and terms related to writing courses, such as "composition class," "freshman composition," or "college composition" into an internet search engine and it will produce tens of thousands of related sites and pages. There is no denying that popular culture in composition is, well, popular. This is cause to celebrate as well as cause for concern. Popular culture has a great deal to offer rhetoric and composition pedagogy, but it has frequently been introduced without sufficient consideration of how it fits in to the pedagogical, theoretical, methodological, or political framework of the writing course.

This dissertation is in part an extended response to a call for help posted on the Writing Program Administration Listserve (WPA-L) several years ago. WPA Laurie Cubbison wrote:

> Every year I have graduate teaching assistants who want to use popular culture in the composition classroom, but their own grasp of cultural studies and theories of popular culture is limited at best, and they design assignments that end up disappointing them. They go into these curricula thinking that their students will respond to such topics, and because they enjoy popular culture themselves, but they do so without much understanding of what to do. . . . I'm looking for something that connects composition theory, cultural studies, and popular culture to curriculum design.

Cubbison's call received a handful of answers suggesting book chapters and instructor's manuals or providing tips in the "what works for me" vein, but it was clear that the comprehensive treatment she sought did not exist.

In addition, compositionists who seek informed pop-culture pedagogies can easily get lost in the ideological conflict and terminological confusion that have marked scholarship on popular culture for decades. From the swirl of competing approaches to pop culture, however, compositionists can draw on two significant research traditions—cultural studies, narrowly defined, and popular culture studies—in designing effective pop culture-based composition curricula. The goal of this project is to present an overview of these intellectual movements and the evolution of popular culture in composition in order to provide administrators and instructors with a foundation for building successful writing pedagogies that integrate pop culture. I then present a hermeneutic and heuristic guide for structuring such curricula that suggests how

instructors can blend content and methods from cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies to support engaging and effective composition courses.

Cultural studies and popular culture studies are overlapping yet distinct research movements that have developed in parallel. Because their similarities and differences have yet to be delineated systematically, however, understanding and integrating materials and methods from cultural studies and popular culture studies is no simple matter.[1] Even experts in these fields debate what their content, theories and methods should be and whether they want others to appropriate them freely. For example, in his polemical 1991 *JMMLA* article "Always Already Cultural Studies," Cary Nelson critiqued the use of cultural studies as "an opportunistic umbrella for English professors who want to study film or the graphic arts" (25) Ten years later, Bethany Ogdon revived this argument in the Spring 2001 *College English* review article "Why Teach Popular Culture?" Nelson and Ogdon join other cultural studies scholars in their critique of writers claiming to "do cultural studies" without locating themselves within the complex historical and theoretical matrix that has defined cultural studies since the 1950s.

As early as 1989, Lawrence Grossberg complained, "'cultural studies' is becoming one of the most ambiguous terms in contemporary theory as it is increasingly used to refer to the entire range of what previously had been thought of as 'critical theory'" (*Bringing* 195). And cultural studies forerunner Stuart Hall closed a 1992 essay

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "cultural studies" to refer to the specific critical theories, methods, and practices promoted by the Birmingham school and its followers. "Popular culture studies" refers to the American movement associated with the Popular Culture Association and its members and publications. To refer to less specific treatments of popular culture, I use the phrase "studies of popular culture," and to refer to composition assignments and pedagogies that emphasize popular texts, I use phrases such as "integration of popular culture" and "pop culture-based composition." These approaches often overlap, and I will discuss how cultural studies and popular culture studies define their terms in Chapter One, but I have sought in my vocabulary to be as specific as possible.

with a discussion of "his concern over 'the rapid professionalization and institutionalization' of cultural studies in the United States" (Ogdon 506). These scholars prefer to define cultural studies narrowly as the content, theory, and methods associated with the critical projects of the Birmingham school. In this view, the broad appropriation and depoliticization of cultural studies that began in the 1980s challenged the integrity of the cultural studies movement.

The tendency toward loose appropriation of cultural studies has only increased, particularly within English Departments. A while ago, a graduate student I know exemplified the current ambiguity of cultural studies in composition when she approached me for advice while preparing for an interview. She is generally considered a strong composition teacher, but she was nervous about her statement of teaching philosophy and concerned about how to answer questions about her pedagogy. She said, "I know I do a lot of the same things you do [she used the same book and had borrowed lesson plans and paper assignments]. Someone told me you do cultural studies, so is my pedagogy cultural studies? And exactly what does that mean?" I share this story not to criticize the graduate student, but to demonstrate that instructors often lack training in this area and use popular-culture and/or cultural-studies texts without really understanding what they are doing or why. In this confusion, many of the useful pedagogical elements of cultural studies are lost. However, these instructors know that "cultural studies" has a lot of academic cachet right now and that aligning themselves with cultural studies can be a good career move. In this sense, the concerns voiced by cultural studies theorists like Hall, Grossberg, Nelson, and Ogdon about the appropriation and commodification of cultural studies have some merit.

Throughout this discussion, I use "cultural studies" to reference the specific Birmingham-influenced tradition these scholars defend, but I do not want to imply that popular culture work that *isn't* "doing cultural studies" by their definition should be ignored or devalued. Such an attitude fails to recognize useful approaches to popular culture from other fields and movements. Popular culture studies is one such distinct and valid area of scholarship. Although the institutional power of cultural studies has allowed it to dominate the critical and pedagogical space of popular culture in composition studies, research and teaching based in popular culture studies can be equally valid—critically, politically, and rhetorically. Many compositionists are unfamiliar with the American popular culture studies movement—even though it influenced pop-culture composition classes from the 1960s through the mid-80s—because popular culture studies does not enjoy the same academic status as cultural studies. This is illustrated by the fact that only one of the scholars listed above even mentions the Popular Culture Association (and that disparagingly) and none mention key popular culture scholars like Ray B. Browne or Marshall Fishwick. Popular culture studies has been ignored in part because of deliberate anti-academic elements within the movement, and in part because of legitimate scholarly weaknesses and poor public relations within academia. Unfortunately, this oversight has resulted in the loss of valuable content and approaches that could inform successful composition curricula.

In order to make the most of useful content and methods from cultural studies and popular culture studies in our own pop-culture pedagogies, we need a clearer understanding of the intellectual and academic constructs these terms denote, their parallel histories, and their contemporary pedagogical applications. There are several

reasons why compositionists, and especially graduate students and new instructors, are uninformed or confused about cultural studies and popular culture studies. Cultural studies and popular culture studies are not clearly defined disciplines; nor are they traditional content areas. It is more appropriate to think of them in terms of research communities, fields, or movements. The parameters of cultural studies and popular culture studies have been contested by experts within each field for decades, and one result of this ambiguity is that intellectuals across the disciplines tend to conflate the two traditions.

Another reason for the blurred boundaries between these two movements is the drive to disciplinarity and professionalism alluded to by Hall. Cultural studies and popular culture studies began as radical movements within, or perhaps more accurately and to use Browne's terms, *against* academia. But the exigencies of disciplinary acceptance and the inevitable commingling of approaches and ideas in practice have resulted in both schools moving toward one another on key features, especially the political and theoretical elements that were at one time their distinguishing features. For example, much early work in cultural studies had an aggressive leftist political agenda, which made many American academics uncomfortable. In order for cultural studies to attain wide academic acceptance, its politics had to be watered down. American critics began emphasizing identity politics and textual critique more than communal action in politics or critiques of material conditions. Popular culture studies, on the other hand, initially eschewed overt politics and was decidedly anti-theory. Because academia greatly values theory, however, many members of the popular culture studies community have embraced critical trends (like British cultural studies) in order to gain credibility. The

result is that these two once distinct fields now look so much alike that it can be very difficult, especially for lay people in composition, to distinguish between them. I find it useful, therefore, to anchor discussions of these fields in "old school"[2] cultural studies and popular culture studies; these more clearly differentiated currents shaped the early integration of popular culture in composition and can offer specific content and practices for writing instruction today. I do not wish to deny the current complexity of either field, but in order to arrive at a solid pop-based curriculum, compositionists need more clearly marked paths than the muddy waters of recent practice allow.

We can get our footing in the origins of cultural studies and popular culture studies, which are rooted in the same historical and cultural moment as composition studies. To support our informed appropriation of elements from both schools, Chapter One traces the evolution of the cultural studies and popular culture studies movements, introduces the definitions and parameters that mark their fields of study, and discusses how elements from both movements shaped the use of popular culture in early composition studies. Chapter Two takes up the historical overview from Chapter One and explains how the debates of the late 1970s led to the ascendancy of cultural-studies approaches in composition throughout the '80s and'90s. Some recent scholarship in the field, however, critiques the cultural studies hegemony and suggests a return to the attitudes and approaches associated with popular culture studies and the early years of pop culture in composition. At the close of the chapter, I combine these critiques with a

[2] "Old school," used frequently in rap, hip-hop and punk communities, has nostalgic connotations and implies a celebration of roots and pure forms. In adopting this term, I recognize the danger of nostalgia for a theoretical and practical clarity that never existed in cultural studies or popular culture studies. However, both movements were initially marked by an idealism and sense of mission that make this somewhat reductive gloss on my part appropriate.

review of recent textbooks in the field to illustrate several weaknesses in current pop-culture pedagogy.

In researching pop-culture composition since the 1950s, I have noticed that interest in pop-culture topics seems to surge every ten years, roughly, and that similar debates surface with each wave. Because many of these debates are marked by the old school rivalry between cultural studies and popular culture studies, a thorough exploration of the issues and debates in their fields can help us gain a clearer understanding of the contentions in our own. Chapter Three, therefore, provides a more detailed introduction to relevant theoretical, methodological, political, and practical commitments that have characterized work in cultural studies and popular culture studies and points toward how these features can inform composition studies. Scholarship in both fields can provide content as well as methods for our own classroom practice and can particularly inform our work at the intersection of the formal, affective, and political dimensions of popular culture.

In the interest of fostering the best practices for incorporating popular culture into the composition curriculum, I propose a pop-culture program for writing instruction that is informed by the traditions of cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies and firmly anchored in classical and contemporary rhetoric and composition theory. In Chapter Four, I argue that a balanced approach to popular culture in composition that synthesizes these elements can solve many of the problems in contemporary practice. The review of popular culture-oriented composition scholarship in Chapters One and Two reveals that much work in this area can be divided into three general categories. In some cases, popular content is studied and written about from a

cultural-studies perspective. In other cases, the approach would more appropriately be classified as popular culture studies. In still other cases, the use of popular culture in the classroom doesn't fit within either framework, but serves a valuable utilitarian function within the composition curriculum nonetheless. Although most teachers and scholars already lean toward certain approaches, these methods have not been systematically implemented or clearly defined.

In Chapter Four, however, I draw on these rough categories and several issues and texts discussed in Chapter Three to establish a hermeneutic and heuristic guide that maps three main avenues for engaging popular culture in composition. *Functional* approaches are concerned with the technical and formalist readings of texts common to popular culture studies, cultural studies, and composition studies. This category also includes the practice of using pop culture primarily as a means to a traditional English-studies end rather than studying popular texts for their own merits. *Relational* approaches focus on the relationship between the reader/audience and pop-culture texts as well as the relationship between producer and text. This level of engagement emphasizes the affective aspects of production, such as the pressures and pleasures associated with the creative process, and the wide range of emotional responses engendered by the act of consumption. These approaches are common in popular culture studies, and have ties to reader-response theory and expressivism in composition studies. *Conjunctural* approaches, based in cultural studies and social-epistemic rhetoric, pursue more comprehensive critical projects that analyze the production, distribution and consumption of texts as well as historical, cultural, and political contexts.

The activities and approaches that constitute these taxonomic categories can be used separately as the basis for individual assignments, but ideally should be combined within a progressive composition curriculum that supports accepted goals for writing instruction, such as those set forth in the Council of Writing Program Administrators' "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." My point is not to argue that any one approach is superior to the others or better suited for composition studies, but that each approach can be fruitfully integrated into the writing classroom to achieve specific goals, from teaching basic reading and writing skills to directing advanced research projects. Throughout Chapter Four, I illustrate these possibilities for pop-culture curricula by presenting specific teaching practices, lesson plans and assignments that enact all three levels of engagement with popular culture and can be tailored for specific student populations. By combining theoretical and methodological discussions with practical pedagogical descriptions, I seek to diminish the theory-practice split common to many contemporary treatments of popular culture in English studies and enact the informed practice that is the goal of this entire project.

Before setting off toward that destination, it is useful to consider what makes this trip worthwhile and how popular culture can help compositionists meet their instructional goals. On the most basic level, first-year composition classes serve as an introduction to college-level academic work and university life. These are often the only classes in which nervous freshmen have significant one-on-one interactions with instructors and other students. Because these interactions are similar to those that students experience in high school yet call on new analytical and discursive skills, using pop-culture materials in this transitional stage can help students connect their everyday lives to their academic work.

When students start from their comfort zone, they can move on to learn the unknown through the known, a sentiment strongly endorsed by Ray B. Browne, who claims, "Popular culture is the practical—pragmatic—Humanities . . . It can be utilized in many ways to overcome illiteracy, to keep people in school, to encourage life-long learning and to energize the educational system and the materials we teach" ("Popular" 1).

From Browne's perspective, the use of popular materials can be particularly helpful for the instruction of basic writers and other at-risk students because it can, among other things, "counter the hocus-pocus of academia that presents literacy—and education in general—as a magic" based on arcane or esoteric knowledge that can be mastered, if at all, only with much time and arduous labor ("Popular" 260). Although they may not "read" popular texts as academic critics do, students are experts on a variety of pop topics and genres and can speak of them authoritatively. This confidence can give students an opening into textual studies and critical strategies that would seem more daunting if both the texts and techniques were completely foreign. Even simple gestures such as allowing students to examine grammatical conventions and stylistic choices in popular magazines rather than only studying traditional textbook essays can foster positive student attitudes and improve classroom atmosphere.

When students are engaged and comfortable, they are more likely to be successful in tackling the academic tasks at hand. One of these tasks is the close and critical reading of texts. By the time students pass freshman composition, they should be proficient in rhetorical analysis, but it is difficult to analyze the persuasive strategies or stylistic elements of a text when one is struggling with the content. Shelli Fowler notes that students are more comfortable reading pop-culture texts in a critical way than they are

with analyzing more traditional academic texts; however, after honing their critical skills on popular song lyrics, students can conduct successful thematic and stylistic critiques of canonical works. As students become more skilled in critical reading, they can apply the rhetorical strategies found in their reading to their own writing.

Just as pop-culture content facilitates the consumption of academic texts, pop-based assignments can serve as a bridge between the production of personal writing and academic texts. A common lesson in writing is that students should write about what they know, or about a topic that really interests them. Studies of pop culture can let students "write about what they know" while avoiding some of the pitfalls of traditional "personal" writing. Bruce McComiskey additionally promotes pop-culture texts as a way to challenge "the binary logic of identity/difference opposition in [students'] writing about culture" as well as the oversimplification so common in beginning writers' position papers and argumentative essays that rely too heavily on personal experiences and opinions ("Teaching" 3). Well-structured, pop-based writing projects avoid being too intrusive into students' personal space, produce new and exciting topics, and promote critical consciousness of the students' surroundings.

In the decades since pop-culture pedagogies and cultural-studies approaches entered the writing curriculum, fostering such critical consciousness and cultural awareness through the analysis of rhetorics students encounter in their everyday lives has become an important goal for many compositionists. While introducing students to academic discourse is still a primary goal for composition programs, few courses still focus only on grammar, organization, and documentation. Rather than setting academic discourse on a pedestal as the only correct way to create and communicate knowledge,

many composition courses have questioned the dominance of traditional essayistic literacy and the ideologies that inform it, choosing to promote wider generic variety and presenting formal discourse primarily as a means of empowerment within dominant social and economic structures.

Toby Daspit has argued that writing about popular culture can be particularly empowering for those students who have traditionally been marginalized by academic discourse by giving them the opportunity to offer authoritative critiques. In order to foster this sense of authority, however, it is important that instructors support students' investigations of *their own* texts, not the teacher's, and that these texts are not set up as inferior to the "elite" cultural texts more often promoted in academic work. Rather than fostering such binary distinctions, the use of pop-culture texts can foster a concrete understanding of distinct discourse communities and how they interact. From the more obvious differences between pop and academia, students can begin to examine the more subtle rhetorical differences between disciplines or critical schools that are often the focus of interdisciplinary writing classes or writing across the curriculum programs.

Whether we approach the benefits of popular culture from the big picture of what it can do for student attitudes, classroom atmosphere, and our courses' political relevance, or from the more technical level of how pop-culture exercises can aid in specific writing tasks and technical skills, it is clear that the integration of popular culture can have an important impact on composition instruction. If we are to make the most effective use of these tools, however, we cannot employ them haphazardly. Our practice should be informed by what has been done in the past, as well as by ongoing conversations about practical and theoretical issues related to pop-based pedagogy. To

support such informed pedagogy, this study tracks the evolution of popular culture in composition as well as contemporary approaches and attitudes toward pop-comp curricula before offering directions for pop-based writing instruction in the future.

Finally, I should explain the title of this dissertation and the traveling metaphors that run through the upcoming chapters. "Long strange trip" is taken from a line in the Grateful Dead song "Truckin'" quoted in the epigraph. I turn to the Dead because this band has come to symbolize the cultural and political moment within which composition studies, cultural studies and popular culture studies began to flourish. The Dead formed (as The Warlocks) in 1965, the same year as the first formal conference in popular culture studies. They were hired as the house band for Ken Kesey's "Acid Tests," which were part of the "happenings" artistic movement Geoffrey Sirc credits with influencing 1960s composition. The Grateful Dead released their self-titled first album in 1967 (the year that the *Journal of Popular Culture* published its first issue and Richard Hoggart's lecture series shaped the fledgling Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) and their music became the sound track for revolutionary movements throughout the late '60s and '70s. Depending on who you talk to, the Dead and their followers may be counter-culture revolutionaries or pot-smoking slackers, but no one can deny their influence on popular culture. Similarly, critics within academia have given composition studies, cultural studies and popular culture studies mixed reviews, but these fields have undeniably shaped the current educational scene.

Like these fields, the Grateful Dead were able to maintain their viability by adapting to the changing times and appealing to new audiences. I find it interesting, for example, that cultural studies gained mainstream academic acceptance in the mid- to late-

‘80s, while the Dead experienced a revival at the same time; their 1987 song “Touch of Grey” became the band’s first Top Ten hit. The band broke up 1995 after Jerry Garcia died, but the Grateful Dead live on in popular culture. The Dead counter-culture has changed, though. While old-school Deadheads would follow the band on long road trips in VW buses, today’s dead fans put stickers on their SUVs but spend more time on the information superhighway. When I was an undergrad, one of my classmates followed the Dead and supported his travels by selling grilled cheese sandwiches at the shows. Now Deadheads can tour dozens of fan sites online and download Grateful Dead ring tones for their cell phones while eating pre-packaged Cherry Garcia ice cream purchased at their local Wal-Mart.

Grateful Dead purists find this commercialization troubling in the same way that some scholars in cultural studies and popular culture studies have objected to the professionalization and commodification of their fields. But the music and the basic ideas are the same, and fortunately you don’t have to be a Deadhead to enjoy the Grateful Dead’s music. Nor do you have to be an expert in cultural studies or popular culture studies in order to use popular culture in your composition classes. As intellectuals, however, we recognize the value of experts and understand that our appreciation of a song or a method is increased through knowledge of origins, contexts, and variations. So, for the last four decades, compositionists have supplemented their own approaches to popular culture with content, theories, and methods from cultural studies and popular culture studies. These research communities have been the “fellow travelers” of composition studies and one another.

Because our knowledge of these movements has been far from complete, however, and because the terrain of composition studies has also changed significantly, the path of popular culture in composition has not exactly been clear, consistent, or linear. Sometimes we have turned the spotlight on pop culture, while at other times it has been a barely seen flicker on the periphery of the field. We have been "going in circles," returning to the same issues and debates time and again. It has indeed been a long, strange trip. But these metaphors seems appropriate to an older way of traveling, guided by landmarks which can always change and maps that we might misread (and can never fold back to the way they were after we use them). There's a lot to be gained from looking at how we've gotten to where we are now, but our goal is to move forward more efficiently.

The way we approach road trips has changed as we've all jumped onto the web along with the Deadheads. As long as you know where you want to go, you can plug the destination into MapQuest or Google Maps and immediately see the "main roads" on an overview map. Type in your current location and another click offers "detailed directions," along with mileage and estimated drive time. The well-to-do and tech-savvy traveler can install a GPS System right on the dashboard that will display a map and/or text directions and even give verbal directions on when to change lanes and turn. I find the predictability and efficiency of such modern navigation attractive, even if it lacks the romance of old school road trips. Indeed, when we hear the term "navigation" today, we are just as likely to think of negotiating the internet as following physical roads. Perhaps the conceptual networks of modern technology allow us to think of mapping in a more sophisticated way because, rather than emphasizing borders within a fixed topography,

they chart the ever-changing and elastic webs of meaning generated by intersecting cultures and interests. I want to maintain a clear and consistent location for popular culture in composition pedagogy, but I also want to harness the potential and flexibility of a more web-like system for navigating the complexities and contradictions that popular culture inevitably brings into our classrooms. The systematic but adaptable conceptual map presented in Chapter Four allows us to enjoy textual journeys in a new way.

Lest we get too optimistic in the comparison, however, it is important to note that no technological network or mapping system is perfect. Just as in traditional cartography, some places aren't clearly mapped. More often, the program just doesn't know the best or quickest way to get where you are going, and you have to discover that through trial and error or by asking a local. Any conceptual map has similar weaknesses, which can only be improved through further study to fill in the gaps and actual practice to find the best approaches for local situations and individual students. Finally, mapping as metaphor also serves as a useful reminder that the terrain of popular culture is always changing and that our students are on their own trips. Our ultimate goal as teachers is helping our students get to where they want to go and, when appropriate, helping them pick a destination. We can serve as better tour guides when we appreciate the landscape of their popular culture. What follows is a useful travelogue of past explorations of popular culture in cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies and an effective map—if only a beta version—for future practice in popular-culture composition curricula.

Chapter One

Fellow Travelers: Cultural Studies, Popular Culture Studies, and Composition Studies

Cultural studies and popular culture studies should be natural allies for composition studies as all three fields share certain features. These research communities have been "fellow travelers" in that they developed within roughly the same time frame, emerging as intellectual movements in the 1950s, expanding throughout the '60s and '70s, and reaching greater academic acceptance or disciplinary status in the '80s and '90s. At the same time, all three have been interdisciplinary or anti-disciplinary and have challenged accepted definitions of the humanities and English studies. These movements share several theoretical influences and in addition have been consistently concerned with pedagogy. In spite of how much these communities have in common, however, many compositionists aren't very familiar with the related fields of cultural studies and popular culture studies. Cultural studies and popular culture studies have a great deal to offer rhetoric and composition, but both movements need to be more clearly understood if they are to be integrated successfully into our work. Cultural studies has become so popular and the term has been bandied about so much that it has almost lost any useful meaning. Popular culture studies has been so ignored in recent decades that it never has had meaning for most younger compositionists.

My goal in this chapter is to (re)introduce compositionists to these fellow travelers through a discussion of the origins and evolution of cultural studies and popular culture studies and how these overlapping but distinct academic movements have defined the parameters of their practice. I will then provide an overview of how scholarship and pedagogy in the developing field of composition studies incorporated content and practice from both movements throughout the 1960s and '70s. This overview and the chapters that follow are far from comprehensive in scope, but together they survey the common ground and sites of contention between cultural studies and popular culture studies that must be considered in any adaptation of their content and methods for composition instruction.

Starting Locations

Part of understanding cultural studies and popular culture studies involves understanding their origins; while both movements gained momentum at the same time and were sparked by a few dedicated thinkers concerned with aspects of culture overlooked in academia, each developed in reaction to unique geographical and institutional contexts. In *Bringing It All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies,* Lawrence Grossberg notes that the evolution of cultural studies has been a very complicated process shaped by "a series of debates with its theoretical 'others'" and "in direct response to overt historical events and demands" (*Bringing* 197). In light of this complexity, it is reductive to present a unified, linear narrative of the development of cultural studies. Grossberg does, however, offer the "standard" or "normative" history of

cultural studies before delving into a more detailed discussion of complex evolutionary elements. A summary of these basics will suffice for our purposes.

Douglas Kellner locates the roots of cultural studies in the Frankfurt School's 1930s work in critical communication studies,[3] and the field was strongly influenced by the works of Marx, Gramsci, Adorno, and Benjamin. In its current formulation, however, cultural studies is associated most closely with the Birmingham School of later decades and how its scholars applied the critical insights of these early critics to specific cultural formations. Kellner discusses how "the focus of British cultural studies at any given moment was mediated by the struggles in the present political conjuncture and their major work was thus conceived as political interventions" (*Media Culture* 36). For example, The Birmingham School's 1960s "studies of subcultures in Britain sought to search for new agents of social change when it appeared that sectors of the working class were being integrated into the existing system and conservative ideologies and parties" (Kellner, *Media Culture* 36). The early projects of cultural studies were not only sparked by academic curiosity, but also by a direct activist agenda.

Grossberg's history of the field expands on this historico-political framework. Cultural studies developed in the 1950s in Britain as a response to "the new forms that modernization was taking after the Second World War," including "the appearance of a 'mass culture' made possible through the nationalization, capitalization, and technologization of the mass media." Its emergence was also shaped by the rise of the

[3] The Frankfurt School "combined political economy of the media, cultural analysis of texts, and audience reception studies of the sociological and ideological effects of mass culture and communications" (Kellner, *Media Culture* 28) and thus is the origin of much contemporary critical theory. The later cultural studies tradition critiqued the Frankfurt School's distinction between high and low culture and its "model of a monolithic mass culture contrasted with an ideal of 'authentic art'" (Kellner 29).

New Left in response to certain failures of traditional Marxism. Not only had Marxism failed as a full-scale political program to check the advancement of capitalism, but as an intellectual and theoretical movement, the old left had not sufficiently engaged the developments of advanced capitalism, such as the effects of economic imperialism and the entrenched disparities based on class, race, and gender that persisted in the "so-called democratic world," and the role of culture and media in promoting the ideology of late capitalism. In the 1960s, therefore, cultural studies concerned itself primarily with the "growing importance of the mass media, not only as a form of entertainment but, inseparably, as what Althusser called 'ideological state apparatuses'" and "the emergence of various subcultures that seemed, in various ways, to resist at least some aspects of the dominant structures of power." The 1970s saw the growing impact of "political and theoretical work around relations of gender and sexual differences" as well as "the rise of the New Right as a powerful political and ideological force in Britain." And from the 1980s onward, these influences have been joined by "a return of many of the more apocalyptic concerns that had emerged in the immediate postwar period (global threats to the future and epochal experiences of irrationality, terror, and meaninglessness)" along with a continuing decline or instability in the status of the political and intellectual left (Grossberg, *Bringing* 198-200).

Cultural studies also developed in reaction to the academic climate of its time. Richard Hoggart, whose *Uses of Literacy* (1957) and lecture series (1967, 1970) profoundly influenced the intellectual shape of cultural studies, founded the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1963. In "Conditions of Their Own Making: An Intellectual History of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at

the University of Birmingham," Norma Schulman discusses the anti-establishment motivations of early cultural studies figures like Hoggart and Raymond Williams:

> Hoggart, and the cultural studies project in general, can be regarded as implicitly addressing an antagonist: the proverbial elitist school of cultural thought in England that argues for a separation between high culture and 'real' life, between the historic past and the contemporary world, or between theory and practice, depending on how one chooses to frame the antinomies.

Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart were both from working class backgrounds, and both felt the alienating distance between their home and school experiences; "they found the intellectual world denied not merely the quality but the very existence of a culture in the communities from which they had come" (Grossberg, *Bringing* 249). These experiences shaped Williams and Hoggart's work and the field of cultural studies, particularly through their premise that culture is always directly shaped by power relations. The pioneers of Birmingham cultural studies certainly felt pressure from the power structure of academic culture:

> Williams and Hoggart and the cultural studies tradition generally directed their initial efforts toward dethroning the Eliot/Leavis tradition and the aristocratic notions it implied as well as toward broadening the study of English as a series of great literary masterpieces to include a sociology of literature. As one former student at the Centre has put it, "cultural studies . . . defined its separation from its parent by its populism... [and] thus consigned itself to institutional marginality." (Schulman)

The Centre particularly came under attack from members of the Sociology department who saw the Centre's work as encroaching on their territory. The Centre was also often in conflict with traditional English scholars, so although it began as part of the English Department, The Centre became an independent unit in 1972 under the directorship of Stuart Hall. The program remained in a somewhat uneasy tension with the rest of the university until it was ultimately dismantled in 2002.[4] According to former student Jan Geerinck, "With its emphasis on the personal as political, sexual politics and anti-racism, the course felt somewhat out of step with the university's David Lodge image of polite Englishness. . . . The fact that the school was housed in a 1960s concrete block only built to last 10 years never suggested that the university's hierarchy considered it of great importance, despite its worldwide reputation."

Cultural studies may have been marginalized in its institutional home, but "with the founding in England of the Cultural Studies Association in 1984, the whole contemporary movement toward establishing cultural studies in the academy attained a significant moment of maturation" (Geerinck). The mid-'80s also saw the beginning of the cultural studies boom in the United States. Cultural studies entered American academia via the field of communication, but was not really recognized until it began infiltrating the higher-status disciplines of English and anthropology and their professional organizations (Grossberg, *Bringing* 277-80). As I will discuss below, British cultural studies began to shape composition scholarship and practice in the 1970s, though the movement didn't attain its current influence in English departments until the

[4] After the Centre was closed in 2002, the few remaining faculty and related courses were "reorganized" and absorbed by the School of Social Sciences; the sociology department offers a degree in Media, Culture, and Society.

next decade. It is also worth noting that English studies also shaped the practice of cultural studies in American universities. Because cultural studies reached its widest American audience through English departments, particularly as literary scholars appropriated its concepts and combined them with other critical theories, American cultural studies has been marked by a stronger textual orientation than the interdisciplinary practice promoted in Birmingham. Furthermore, as it has been devoted primarily to critical readings of texts rather than contemporary cultural configurations, American cultural studies has taken on a less interventionist political flavor.

When cultural studies "arrived" in America, popular culture studies was celebrating two decades of progress, and the first international chapter of the Popular Culture Association had just been established in Japan. There are, in fact, several interesting parallels in the evolution of the two movements. In both cases, their revolutionary beginnings were initiated by dedicated individuals with their own autobiographical reasons for bucking the academic establishment. And because cultural studies and popular culture studies were both in their infancy during the 1960s, they had similar historical, political, and philosophical influences. The different geographical context of popular culture studies' evolution, however, contributed to somewhat different political and social contexts. The cultural climate in America was particularly influenced by the impact of Vietnam, the civil rights movement, and a variety of political, cultural and counter-cultural movements that challenged established norms and morals. These movements ushered in important social, economic, and academic changes; they also sparked a conservative backlash against the popular culture that promoted such changes as well as the academics and students who were seen as radical instigators.

Popular culture studies, much like composition studies, began in part as a response to open admissions, the GI Bill, and a felt need to close the gap between elite academic culture and students' lived experiences. Ray B. Browne offers a very detailed account of the development of popular culture studies in *Against Academia: The History of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association and the Popular Culture Movement 1967-1988*. A few highlights will suffice to provide a basic timeframe and background. It is worth noting at the outset that "Popular Culture" didn't appear as a *Reader's Guide* subject heading until 1960 (Fishwick 12). The first formal popular culture studies event—the Midwest Conference on Literature, History, Popular Culture and Folklore—was held at Purdue five years later (Browne, *Against* 10). This conference was the brainchild of Ray B. Browne, who, along with Carl Bode, Russel B. Nye, Marshall Fishwick and others, spearheaded the popular culture studies movement.[5] These early pop-culture enthusiasts pursued common interests within the context of a common enemy—the conservative academic establishment. Ray B. Browne discusses how the pop-culture movement was primarily initiated by people who were "tired and bored, burned out, frustrated with their academic pursuits and want[ing] something new" (*Against* 3). Theirs was a movement of protest and rebellion against the elitism and irrelevance of a backward-looking or navel-gazing academia.

Obviously, there were times when the movement was not at all popular within the academy it challenged. As Maurice Hungiville writes, when Russel B. Nye began studying popular culture, the academic climate was far from welcoming:

[5] *Pioneers in Popular Culture Studies* (1999) edited by Ray B. Browne and Michael T. Marsden provides information about thirteen key figures in the field's development.

> Hostility to popular culture was especially strong in the universities where the "new criticism," popularized by conservative southerners, dominated most English departments. Promoting a method of close, intense reading, the new critics valued complicated elitist literature. The more obscure, the more complicated, the more teachable and, therefore, more valuable text. Accessible and obvious popular literature was understandably scorned, devalued, or simply ignored. English departments were, above all, concerned with modernism . . . "The mind of literary modernism," Richard Hofstadter observed in *The Progressive Historians*, "is convinced beyond doubt or hesitation of the utter speciousness of bourgeois value, and it is altogether without hope, usually without interest, in the proletariat." (159)

Hungiville's worthwhile discussion of the causes for hostility toward the popular also includes the influences of Marxism, McCarthyism, and the presentation of conformity in American life within the creative writing of the time.[6]

But forerunners like Nye and Browne undertook their mission regardless, often at the risk of their own popularity and sometimes even their employment. In several cases, they were willing to do so because their commitment to the cause was fueled by their personal backgrounds and experiences. Ray B. Browne grew up in poor, rural Alabama

[6] Hungiville claims that Marxists simply saw popular culture as an opiate of the masses. McCarthyism was problematic because of the defensive responses it evoked. "Intellectuals in explaining McCarthy would also explain away a vital American populist tradition. . . . If political populism was a disturbing, anti-intellectual, possibly anti-Semitic rejection of the eastern elite's political leadership, then popular culture could only be a rejection of the cultural leadership of the eastern elite" (160). As for the writers, Hungiville explains that the sociology and fiction of the time presented conformity, not communism, as "the major American enemy," and popular culture was seen as a tool for spreading and enforcing conformity (161).

after the stock market crash–an experience which greatly influenced his views of culture and social justice (Browne, *Against* 4-5). In several of the profiles in *Pioneers in Popular Culture Studies*, descriptions of proletariat backgrounds and other outsider experiences help explain why the scholar embraced popular culture studies. Susan Koppelman, for example, grew up in a first-generation American-Jewish family committed to providing her with a multi-cultural education, and she was deeply affected by the racial and religious discrimination she witnessed first hand. These experiences "prefigured and prepared her for work as a feminist popular culture scholar" (Toth and Koppelman 139). As was the case in England with Williams and Hoggart, the founders of popular culture studies were prompted by their lived experiences to challenge the elite academic culture. And once again, there was considerable institutional resistance.

Browne founded the *Journal of Popular Culture* and the Center for the Study of Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University in 1967 and 1968 (*Against* 15). He continued to make progress for popular culture studies on a local and national level, but the road was not without obstacles. In Browne's words:

> Increasingly the sentiment seemed to be running strongly against my action in trying to promote the study of popular culture. I had founded the Popular Culture Association in 1970, the Popular Press published its first book in the same year, and the whole movement was getting a lot of press coverage. So I think that by 1970-71 the Department saw the whole popular culture movement as much more of a threat than they had anticipated, and they were prepared to work against it. . . . Sentiment mushroomed and soon I was hoisted on a three-pronged petard that my

> activities were 1) a misspending of the tax-payers [*sic*] money, 2) a disservice to the students, and 3) I personally was disgracing the university in the eyes of the public and academics. (*Against* 17)

The English Department wanted to oust him, but no other department would have him. Finally, Browne fought for and won a small separate Department of Popular Culture—the only one in the world— in 1972 (Hoppenstand 33). The department was well-received—at least by the student body: "The frame of mind of the late 60s was still in the air, and many students wanted to continue their training in fields and methodologies that they thought 'relevant' and 'useful'" (Browne, *Against* 18). The call for relevance and student engagement was also a reason for the introduction of popular culture in composition studies, and remains an important justification for the inclusion of pop texts in writing courses.

Among established academics, however, even those who saw popular culture's practical benefits and enjoyed related scholarship were often reluctant to associate themselves with the movement. In establishing the Popular Culture Association, Marshall Fishwick initially "favored 'Contemporary Culture,' saying that 'Popular Culture would be seen as light-weight" by their colleagues (Browne, *Against* 21). Fishwick knew his audience. In 1978, Browne realized the need for a Journal of American Culture and an American Culture Association to fill the gap between the Popular Culture Association (which many academics saw as "lowering the standards of scholarly achievement and involvement") and the existing American Studies Association (which Browne and his colleagues saw as "too narrow, too elitist, and not sufficiently relevant") (*Against* 57). Not everyone agreed with the need for the new association and

publication, but once established they did indeed lure new members from a variety of disciplines who had been reluctant to join the Popular Culture Association. The two associations began and continue to hold concurrent conferences, however, and facilitate dual participation by offering integrated programs. As Browne characterizes the relationship between the two associations:

> True they feed in the same field, but they eat essentially on different flora. Some of the interests of the two groups are the same. Often the same people belong to both Associations. This is not to say, however, that that the two interests of the same people are the same. The Popular Culture Association is a philosophical statement. The American Culture Association is to a certain extent a political statement; it was created to satisfy and to appeal to a particular group of people. So far it has succeeded. There are still many areas of scholarly interest and research which either do not fall within the provenance of the Popular Culture Association or which can be better accommodated in the American Culture Association. (*Against* 68)

This recognition of productive similarity and difference is also instructive when comparing cultural studies and popular culture studies. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, scholarship in these fields often covers similar territory and there is significant theoretical and methodological overlap, but there are philosophical and political distinctions between the two movements that warrant the recognition of cultural studies and popular culture studies as independent fields. Furthermore, while the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association have developed in concert,

popular culture studies, cultural studies, and their proponents in English studies have often defined themselves against one another more antagonistically. If we negotiate a more productive dialectical tension between cultural studies and popular culture studies, however, we can incorporate the most useful elements of both into composition studies.

The origin and evolution of these two fields offer just one example of how the movements have been quite similar, yet marked by significant, if subtle, differences. For example, both research communities began with a few key thinkers responding to their unique cultural and academic contexts; but while all of the founders of popular culture studies began from within established departments in academia, "All of the founding figures of cultural studies (including Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall) started their careers, and their intellectual projects, in the field of education, outside the university, in extramural departments and adult working-class courses" (Grossberg, *Bringing* 375) . This difference is significant for several reasons.

One is that these origins have affected the content and philosophy of both movements. Cultural studies began outside of the university and as a response to political and cultural issues beyond academia. Popular culture studies began within academia and, though it was obviously shaped by cultural and political forces in the larger society, it was essentially a response to academic culture and academic politics. At the risk of over-simplifying, cultural studies set out on a mission to change the culture, while popular culture studies was mainly concerned with studying and teaching more of the culture than their traditional academic institutions would allow. Both movements thus challenged the traditional literary canons and New Criticism, but on different

premises. Popular culture studies argued that academics should study popular culture because it exists, it is the culture of our students, and in a democratic society we should not denigrate the culture of the people. Cultural studies, on the other hand, argued that academics should study popular culture because it is the terrain wherein ideologies are contested and hegemonies maintained and, in an oppressive society, we should intervene to help the people understand, critique, and challenge the powerful forces that shape their cultural and material conditions.

Regarding content, then, the popular culture studies community has generally focused on texts and textual relationships while cultural studies has focused on contexts and contextual consequences. In terms of English studies, popular culture studies approaches were more likely to apply accepted literary-critical strategies to non-canonical texts while cultural-studies approaches were more likely to bring new theories and methods (from economics, sociology, anthropology, etc.) to bear on traditional texts (though cultural studies as a field is also deeply concerned with pop texts and culture as text). These are certainly not either/or propositions, but a matter of foregrounding specific elements of a given rhetorical situation.

Regarding consequences, another effect of these differing origins and evolutions is, ironically, that cultural studies has been able to attain a solid footing in academia while popular culture studies has remained marginalized. Both movements faced academic opposition initially, but because cultural studies began outside of academia and in opposition to larger political forces, it could be adopted into academia, though it has been domesticated to a certain extent. Popular culture studies, however, began within and against academia; in order to justify their research and distinguish themselves,

scholars in popular culture studies essentially had to attack their own institutions, departments, and colleagues as elitist or irrelevant. Some members of the movement did so more aggressively than others and, inevitably, some bridges to academic status were burned. Ray B. Browne, perhaps the most visible proponent of popular culture studies, has published a number of aggressive attacks that may have harmed the status of the entire movement. But a positive result of the movement's challenge to academic elitism is that popular culture studies has remained open to scholars at all levels and has reached out to graduate students, community college instructors, and those without institutional affiliations to a far greater extent than cultural studies. Again, this seems ironic given cultural studies' extracurricular origins, but unsurprising in light of its evolution in American universities based on elite, professional hierarchies.

Finally, as more scholars in American English departments moved away from New Criticism, they generally favored imported theory and often looked overseas for methods. Because popular culture studies is home-grown and has remained a grass-roots movement, it hasn't been able to attain the cachet or authority conferred upon cultural studies. Although composition studies developed alongside both movements, it seems particularly similar to popular culture studies in that pioneers and programs in rhetoric and composition also had to challenge the English departments that housed them. In many cases, the relationship between literature and composition in these departments is still an uneasy one, while in other cases compositionists were driven to establish independent programs. Like popular culture studies, composition studies' content and institutional context have made the field congenial to educators and students that had been alienated by traditional English studies.

In some ways, the commitments to pedagogy and popular literacy that characterized these movements in the 1960s and '70s have ensured that composition studies and popular culture studies are likely to remain undervalued in academia. This second-class status may be one reason why, instead of maintaining a ghettoized solidarity with popular culture studies, composition studies has tended to follow their English department peers in privileging cultural studies. With its established disciplinarity, however, composition studies has seemingly reached a level of autonomy and academic status that will allow it to investigate both movements more objectively. Throughout their parallel evolutionary journeys, there are instances in which cultural studies and popular culture studies have much in common, but signal differences show them to be distinct fields that can make unique and valuable contributions to composition studies.

Charting Territories

In addition to their origins and current academic status, cultural studies and popular culture studies can be differentiated by how both movements have defined the parameters of their practice. Saying that someone is "doing cultural studies" or "doing popular culture studies" isn't as simple as, for example, saying that someone is "doing math." Mathematics consists of generally agreed upon fields, such as calculus or applied discrete mathematics, with clearly defined subject matter, theories and methods. To learn about these fields in college, one takes classes offered by the math department. In contrast, practitioners of cultural studies and popular culture studies are generally spread throughout a number of disciplines—primarily communication, English, anthropology, and sociology—and they generally offer courses within their own departments. While a

growing number of colleges and universities are offering majors or minors in cultural studies, very few have independent departments of cultural studies. If there is a departmental designation for cultural studies, it is usually in the form of an "and"—communication and cultural studies, English and cultural studies, linguistics and cultural studies, etc. Similarly, many departments offer courses that deal with pop-culture content, but Bowling Green still has the only independent department of popular culture studies.

The founders of the Popular Culture Association came primarily from the American Studies Association (40%) and English departments (30%). The remaining members came from a variety of disciplines, ranging "from sociology and speech communication to music and home economics" (Hoppenstand 43). David Wright, second president of the American Culture Association, worked to include scholars from other areas such as photography, architecture, and technology studies (Browne, *Against* 62). Popular culture studies also offered an early welcome to the field of women's studies; the first women's studies session at PCA was held at the second annual convention in 1972, and in the same year the Popular Press at Bowling Green published Susan Cornillon-Koppelson's *Images of Women in Popular Literature*, their first book in women's studies, which helped to define the field (Toth and Koppelman 147, Hoppenstand 54). In addition to "Women in Popular Culture," the earliest listing of area chairs also included an area on "Ethnic Groups and Popular Culture," and the PCA and ACA have consistently fostered multicultural scholarship, particularly in African American and Latin American studies. From its inception, then, popular culture studies

defined itself as an interdisciplinary enterprise that welcomed diversity and promoted other "upstart" interdisciplinary projects and programs.

Interdisciplinarity has also been a key concept for cultural studies. The founders of the Birmingham school considered the theories and methods of English and sociology to be limiting and antagonistic to their activist goals, and thus saw the need for cultural studies to cross disciplinary boundaries as well as the border between academic and public life. As Grossberg explains, "the form of its interdisciplinary character is built upon the recognition that much of what one requires to understand cultural practices and relations is not, in any obvious sense, cultural . . . . Cultural studies does not attempt to explain everything from the cultural point of view; rather it attempts to explain culture using whatever resources are intellectually and politically necessary and available" (*Bringing* 236-37). In their investigations of culture, cultural studies scholars have drawn on a variety of interdisciplinary methods, particularly from the social sciences, and they have likewise supported gender studies, ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, and other interdisciplinary explorations.

In light of this early recognition, one of Grossberg's consistent critiques of contemporary cultural studies, particularly in the U.S., is that it has not been truly interdisciplinary. Instead, scholars within entrenched disciplines, especially English, have appropriated elements of cultural studies without really changing their methods or going beyond shallow interdisciplinary dabbling. A similar complaint could be lodged against much popular culture studies scholarship; it is interdisciplinary in the sense that there are popular culture scholars in many disciplines, but few undertake overtly interdisciplinary projects. In their initial conception and ideal application, however, both cultural studies

and popular culture studies are interdisciplinary, or perhaps more accurately anti-disciplinary, and thus draw from a variety of theories and methods, which I will discuss in Chapter Three. Because cultural studies and popular culture studies lack a clear disciplinary home, I refer to them as research communities or movements, and sometimes areas or fields, instead of as disciplines.

There is also the matter of how strictly scholars within these fields choose to define their parameters. Grossberg has written, "Those of us working in 'cultural studies' find ourselves caught between the need to define and defend its specificity and the desire to refuse to close off the ongoing history of cultural studies by any such act of definition" (*Bringing* 235). However, the works of Bethany Ogdon, Cary Nelson, Douglas Kellner, and Grossberg himself indicate that many within cultural studies want to define their field rather strictly and that they are troubled by the widespread appropriation of cultural studies. Grossberg outlines several features of current critical approaches that claim to be cultural studies, but which don't necessarily meet his standards for cultural-studies practice. The scholars who employ such approaches tend to focus on identity, especially in terms of gender, sexuality, and race, in ways that "walk a fine line between essentialism and anti-essentialism." They embrace "high theory (especially literary poststructuralism, media postmodernism, and anthropological postcolonialism)" but generally rely on a "communicational model of culture (as encoding-decoding, or production and consumption)" and "textual-interpretive methodologies, supplemented with a weak sense of ethnographic research." Additionally, such studies fall back on "disciplinary definitions of intellectual problems, projects, and standards," and display ambivalence about their "relation to already existing political constituencies." (*Bringing*

295) In Grossberg's estimation, these approaches lack the theoretical sophistication or particular political focus that define cultural studies. Specifically, they do not pursue the interdisciplinary and conjunturalist methodology of cultural studies and/or they do not pursue an interventionist and progressive political agenda.

A variety of approaches to popular culture that emphasize textual features, reader-response, or production cycle analysis do not meet Grossberg's standards for cultural studies, but they are still quite valuable for compositionists. In fact, I think many of the studies that Grossberg and others criticize fit well within the more flexible paradigm of popular culture studies. Popular culture studies has consistently welcomed diverse content and methods and has also fostered scholarly participation by researchers and writers from all levels of academia as well as those outside of academia. While some academics might argue that such inclusive policies could only lead to lower standards, Browne contends that the work in this field has been consistently of high quality and merit.[7] M. Thomas Inge, a pioneer in popular culture criticism and scholarship on comics, was convinced that "the same principles apply to scholarship devoted to major American authors, world literary figures, and popular culture artifacts," and he was a harsh critic of pop-culture work that didn't meet high standards in research, documentation, and presentation (Dunne 125). While cultural studies scholars have often dismissed popular culture studies for an uncritical acceptance of pop culture, Inge argues that popular

[7] I will not deny that some early collections supported by the PCA and published by the Popular Press were of inconsistent quality. *Popular Culture and Curricula* (1972), for example, contained the piece "The Poop on Pop Pedagogy," by Arthur Asa Berger, which was little more than a detailed outline. It contained some interesting ideas, but the development and punctuation left much to be desired. And the juvenile cover art and typesetting of this collection did not reflect well on the emerging field, but the early numbers of several prestigious rhetoric and composition journals looked much the same.

culture studies is indeed a serious critical movement, though it operates more often within the mode of literary criticism than ideological critique.

Compositionists should not, therefore, exclude scholarship from consideration only because it doesn't fulfill certain pre-existing expectations for cultural studies. To do so would make us guilty of the very academic elitism that cultural studies and popular culture studies were created to challenge. Instead, we should hold work from both fields to the same scholarly standards and we should integrate the ideas from both movements that best meet our needs as scholars and teachers. Because this process of integration must start from a general understanding of what cultural studies and popular culture studies entail, the following section offers a detailed discussion of how these research communities define their parameters.

Terms and Contents

Defining "popular" and "culture" and "popular culture" is a far from elementary exercise, and debates over how to frame and employ these terms have shaped cultural studies, popular culture studies, and their relationship to one another. It is important to note at the outset that studies of popular culture are only part of cultural studies, as Grossberg is quick to point out:

> Unfortunately, cultural studies is too often being used merely as an excuse for disciplines to take on new, usually popular, cultural objects. Too many people in traditional disciplines seem to think that, when they start writing about television or rock music and so on, they are doing cultural studies.

> Cultural studies is not defined by a particular sort of text; in that sense, you can do cultural studies of almost anything. (*Bringing* 246)

Though the current discussion emphasizes its treatment of popular culture, cultural studies generally promotes a broader approach to cultural texts and interactions. From the cultural-studies perspective, an early Centre position statement offered the following definition of culture: "We understand the word 'culture' to refer to that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their social and material life-experience. Culture is the way, the forms, in which groups 'handle' the raw material of their social and material existence" (qtd. in Grossberg, *Bringing* 215). In *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*, John Storey amplifies the focus on lived experience and struggle. "'Culture' in cultural studies is defined politically rather than aesthetically"; this broad definition of culture as "the texts and practices of everyday life" regards culture "as a terrain of conflict and contestation" (Storey 2). "Culture" thus becomes a loaded word. When cultural studies turns its attention to popular culture, "popular" likewise takes on layers of meaning. In the affective sense, Grossberg associates the popular with "that which is always inscribed upon the body" through "visceral responses" that result from "the affective and libidinal work of the popular. . . . The popular, then, describes concrete, historically located 'sensibilities' (Bordieu); it is a matter of effectivity determined by the ways in which 'popular objects' are taken up, invested in, and articulated" (*Bringing* 232). This sensual

nature of the popular is one reason for its centrality in lived experience and marginalization in empirical academic contexts.[8]

The political valence of "popular culture" for cultural studies results in part from the influence of Gramsci's articulation of hegemony, in which the ruling bloc maintains dominance through force *and* by winning popular assent. This assent is achieved in part through the "national popular." Grossberg sees this "popular" as simultaneously central to and marginalized by most studies of culture.

> It is this determination of "the popular," the articulation of *the popularity of* particular discourses that defines the focus of postmodern cultural studies. The repressed of culture studies (and it is still being repressed in the contemporary appropriation of the term), that which needs to be placed back on the agenda, is the specificity of, and struggles around, the popular. The denigration of popular discourse has a long history and has been accomplished through a variety of strategies (e.g., from Plato, Augustine, and the Enlightenment to Marxism and the neoconservatives); the popular is generally granted status only when it can be reclaimed to the operations of "art" or, perhaps, ideology. (*Bringing* 232)

John Storey confirms the importance of the popular to the critical project of cultural studies. "Although cultural studies cannot (and should not) be reduced to the study of popular culture, it is certainly the case that the study of popular culture is central to the project of cultural studies." As one reason for this centrality, Storey cites Stuart Hall's

[8] Despite Grossberg's attention to the material and sensual, popular culture studies has generally emphasized affective elements of popular culture more than cultural studies. I will summarize these divergent attitudes toward pleasure in Chapter Three.

argument that popular culture is "partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. . . . That is why 'popular culture' matters" (2-3).

Though few cultural studies scholars would contest the importance of all that is signified by "popular culture," some find fault with the signifier; indeed "popular culture" has become a term so mired in ideology that some scholars prefer not to use it at all. Douglas Kellner critiques the unproblematic adoption of the term "popular culture," particularly in reference to media, because it "collapses the distinction between culture produced by the people, or "popular classes," contrasted to mass-produced media culture in which the audience is reduced to "a passive receiver of predigested meanings" (*Media Culture* 33). Kellner also rejects the term because of its association with the Popular Culture Association, which, he argues, "often engages in uncritical affirmation of all that is 'popular.' Since the term is associated in the US with individuals and groups that often eschew critical, theoretically informed, and political approaches to culture, it is risky to use the term 'popular culture'" (34). While I find Kellner's characterization of the PCA disdainful and not entirely accurate, he raises the important point that "In view of the contest over terminology, each intervention in the field of cultural studies needs to lay out and explicate its critical language, distinguish itself from other discourses, and clarify its own specific use of the vocabulary" (34).[9] One of the reasons for the current confusion

[9] Kellner adopts, instead, the term "media culture," which "signifies both the nature and form of the artifacts of the culture industries (i.e. culture) and their mode of production and distribution (i.e. media technologies and industries" and indicates "that the media have colonized our culture" (*Media Culture* 34-35). Interestingly, however, he does not see "media culture" as having the ideological baggage of the terms "mass" and "popular culture." While "media culture" suits the objects of Kellner's study, it would not serve in certain other cultural studies contexts, particularly historical studies, in which "the popular" and "that produced and disseminated by the media" are not necessarily synonymous.

about what constitutes cultural studies and popular culture studies has been inconsistent or conflicting uses of similar terminology.

In his recent "The Virus of Superficial Popular Culture Studies," Ray Browne agrees that terminology has important consequences, though for him "popular culture" is the valued phrase. He argues that "academic carelessness" and "verbal laziness" led to widespread use of the abbreviation "pop," which has come "to mean cheapness and tawdriness in society in general and the everyday entertainment world—like movies, music, radio, and sports—in particular" (214). As a result of this terminological shorthand and common narrowing of scope, "Popular culture has not received the understanding and dignity it deserves" (214). Here and elsewhere, Browne takes a highly defensive stance about the academic and democratic value of popular culture that is perhaps a natural result of his early struggles but which may not accurately reflect contemporary popular culture studies or be in its best interest.

Rather than rejecting "pop," I use this term interchangeably with "popular" throughout this study for several reasons. One reason is that in my work I do tend to focus on the popular texts of movies, television, and music that most people think of when they hear the phrase "pop culture." Additionally, in this study and in my pedagogical practice, I value all of my students' cultural choices and I want to reclaim the sometimes derogatory term "pop" in the interest of reviving the populist and celebratory elements of the early popular culture studies movement. All of the texts students encounter and enjoy can be worthwhile objects for serious studies, yet these studies need not take themselves so seriously that the pleasure derived from these texts is lost. It seems to me that Browne's late protests, like Kellner's, are more concerned with the

politics of institutional legitimacy than with the actual content of their respective studies, but their concern with linguistic specificity is valid and commendable. Few works in cultural studies or popular culture studies define their terms so explicitly, which is another reason for the current confusion regarding these fields.

In defining their objects of study, both cultural studies and popular culture studies have sought to cover a lot of territory. One notable distinction is that popular culture studies initially located all elite culture beyond the parameters of their study, whereas cultural studies examined texts and contexts in and between all levels of society. A passage from Browne's *Against Academia* relates how those involved with the establishment of the Popular Culture Association characterized their project:

> It was immediately apparent that we needed a philosophical and theoretical definition of popular culture for our own good and for those who had similar ideas about the Humanities and social sciences but who might not know that they were interested in popular culture. All of us in these early days had our own definition, but generally speaking we could all agree that we were talking about all elements of the culture around us except the narrowly elite and the narrowly elitely creative. Popular culture to us was the everyday, the vernacular, the heritage and ways of life inherited from our predecessors, used, and passed on to our descendants. It was the cultural environment we lived in. Popular culture is mainly disseminated by the mass media (word of mouth, print, radio, pictures, movies, television) but not necessarily limited to such media of dissemination. Popular culture probably should not include some ten

> percent of so-called elite culture but it should include all folk culture. It is by definition international and comparative in scope, with no time limit; it is not restricted to the present. (24)

While some might equate pop culture with current or recent trends and fads, works like Fred E. H. Schroeder's *5000 Years of Popular Culture: Popular Culture Before Printing* indicate that popular culture has always existed in complex relation to historical, social, and economic forces (Marsden 200). In *Seven Pillars of Popular Culture*, Marshall Fishwick describes the trans-historical and ubiquitous nature of popular culture studies by highlighting the centrality of popular culture in all eras and the need to examine its "evolutionary process" (6). Fishwick's work outlines some important parameters or sites of attention for popular culture scholarship, and he traces his seven pillars—*demos, ethnos, heros, theos, logos, eikons,* and *mythos*—from their foundations in classical Greece and the earliest civilizations though the present and into the future.

If the trans-historical nature of popular culture has been a given, the same cannot be said of Browne's early distinction between "elite" and "popular" culture. In the 1980s, M. Thomas Inge contended that "there are no distinctions between what we call high culture and popular culture, at least not in this century in the United States . . ." (qtd. in Dunne 132). The lack of clear distinctions is also present in the work of other popular culture scholars, like Susan Koppelman, who argues that "what is 'high' culture for one group may be 'low,''folk,' or 'popular' culture from the perspective of another, that the elements underlying the categories are dominated not by aesthetic principles, but by socio-political factors and power inequities, and that there are only 'histories' and never 'history'" (Toth and Koppelman 139).

David R. Shumway explains some of the etymological debates surrounding "popular" and "culture" in popular culture studies, noting that both terms are "floating signifiers, *par excellence*." Drawing on the OED definition of "popular" as "of or pertaining to the common people, or the people as a whole as distinguished from any particular class," Shumway notes two possible connotations of popular—that chosen by the people and created by the people, for the people, or the culture of the common people as opposed to the culture of the elite. In the second usage, the common culture could be construed as inferior to elite culture or as equal/superior to the elite culture but "unfairly denigrated" by the elite. Similarly, Shumway delineates two primary definitions of "culture." One is the anthropological definition of culture as a group's way of life—this broad definition includes all manner of activities and artifacts. The other implies the Arnoldian concept of "high culture" as the best that has been thought and said. (164)

While the scholarship in popular culture studies does include the anthropological definition (in studies on topics ranging from family rooms and television programs to barbecues and chili festivals), Shumway notes that "the dominant meaning of the construction 'popular culture' combines the positive, democratic meaning of 'popular' with the Arnoldian meaning of 'culture' so that the study of popular culture is understood to be the study of works of art enjoyed by the majority of the population" (164-65). Shumway contends that the dominant meanings of each term are in conflict with one another, and this leads to the conflicting strategies used to legitimate popular culture studies. There are those who argue for studying popular culture because that is what most people like, but others "seek to distinguish on aesthetic grounds among various

artifacts within a popular genre or art form, and they have usually relied on standards borrowed from the criticism of high culture forms" (165).

The first view is articulated by Harold E. Hinds, Jr. who claims that "popularity" based on wide distribution and consumption as demonstrated by statistics of total audience or sales should be the definitive distinction between popular culture and other cultural events or objects. Hinds argues:

> By selecting one key variable, popularity, as the essence of [popular culture studies], we can delete older analytic conceptualizations which have mystified, not aided, in discerning the basic elements and characteristics of popular culture. Popular culture commentators have subdivided culture into folk, elite, and mass; or into high, folk, mid, and mass, or high and popular; and so on. Popularity demands that it alone be considered as a criterion, not categories imposed by some extraneous value or social system. ("Popularity: The *Sine Qua Non*" 213)

In Hinds' view, the blockbuster film or top-forty tune is key, even if the critics panned it. Our culture's obsession with box-office numbers and Billboard charts seems to confirm the value of such an approach.

On the other hand, John G. Cawelti, has "argued for the need to define a [pluralist] aesthetic suitable to the different kinds of experiences and pleasures associated with different popular culture texts and genres," and he has suggested that popular culture critics should develop a "'canon' representing the best that has been thought and said among popular texts" (Tatum 80). Although this Arnoldian quest for canonicity may seem counter to the democratic populism of popular culture studies, popular culture itself

is full of such canons. *TIME* magazine, for example, has recently published a series of evaluative lists by pop-culture critics on topics such as "5 Fantastic Graphic Novels," "5 Memoirs You Won't Forget," the best film of each decade since *TIME* began, and other groups of worthwhile books, DVDs, and CDs. But while *TIME's* lists give equal time to serious popular poetry collections and lighter beach books, Diane Railton has noted a tendency among academics to value popular culture they deem to have a certain "artistic and/or political importance" while ignoring pop texts with no such pretensions (par. 4-7). The result is that traditional academic distinctions between high/elite and low/popular culture are supplemented by distinctions between high pop culture and low pop culture.

For many contemporary popular culture scholars, it seems that changing times and changing theoretical viewpoints have resolved the debate about where to draw the lines between pop, mass, high, low, mid and folk culture by doing away with the lines altogether. In the mid-nineties, Dennis Hall predicted, "In the twenty-first century . . . there will be no study of popular culture as we now commonly understand it. Popular culture is no longer considered simply a matter of amusement somehow different from enlightenment and operating on the periphery of social, economic, and political life; it stands at the center" (27). The current conditions of capitalism and the influence of post-structuralism and postmodernism equalize artifacts previously marked as high, pop, or mass cultural texts. Thus, Hall concludes, "They are all signal commodities, consumed in the infinite extension of the desire for signifiers. Subjective sensibility is remarkably democratic in both its causes and effects. Postmodernism, indeed, has robbed popular culture studies of its oppositional character, its almost definitive posture vis-à-vis elite and to a lesser extent folk culture" (27). Or it may be more accurate to say that

proponents of elite culture and pop culture denigrate one another equally, as illustrated by the recent reality shows "The Simple Life" and "I Want To Be a Hilton" in which wealthy celebrities and poor folks from middle American are shown to be equally (sym)pathetic.

Cawelti suggests that the current intellectual climate mirrors the wider culture's blurring of elite/pop distinctions and has accepted pop culture and pop-culture scholarship; "It no longer seems necessary to preface analyses of popular genres with an elaborate justification and apology for the 'serious' consideration of such material. In fact, when an occasional article does so, one hears the screams of a long-dead horse hovering ghostlike in the air" ("Masculine" 122). Of course, just because popular culture scholars choose not to credit such evaluative categories doesn't mean that the rest of academia will cease to recognize and promote such distinctions. As Shumway concedes, "The problem of legitimizing popular culture, whether that means either the study of objects not recognized as art or the whole field of products popularly consumed, determines that dominant values or aesthetic standards will not be abandoned since it is those who hold these values to whom the case for legitimacy must be made" (165). It is thus likely that popular culture scholars will continue to contend with differing values and aesthetics within academia at large and among themselves as they delineate the terms and objects of their studies.

The competing definitions that mark cultural studies and popular culture studies are not simply etymological and linguistic maneuvers. They reflect divergent ways of thinking about their subject matter that have greatly informed each movement's practice. I will discuss some of the theoretical, methodological, and political commitments that

distinguish these fields in Chapter Three. Attitudes and approaches from both cultural studies and popular culture studies played an important role in composition throughout the 1960s and '70s, and one goal of this dissertation is to reclaim of the richness and diversity that marked those early explorations of popular culture in writing instruction.

Composition's Early Explorations

Perhaps this reclamation project should begin from the obvious recognition that popular culture in composition is nothing new. We've been down this road before—a few times. In fact, there are connections between popular culture and composition's ancient rhetorical tradition. Marhsall Fishwick claims, for example, that Cicero was the father of popular culture studies. The sophists were also concerned with everyday, context-specific culture, as were Plato and Aristotle, though to different ends. More recently, James Berlin has argued that writing instructors have employed elements of cultural studies since the turn of the century. For the purposes of the present inquiry, however, I will begin this overview of popular culture in composition studies with the 1949 creation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the publication of *CCC*. In "The History of Rhetoric and Composition as Cultural Studies," Pauline Uchmanowicz explains that the impetus for the creation of the Conference was the communication movement that began in the 1940s when scholars in the fields of Speech and English recognized their shared rhetorical tradition (4). Uchmanowicz notes that "General categories of study in popular culture—magazines, comic books, film, radio and television—had been discussed at 4C's meetings beginning in the early 1950s" and "audio-visual aids became an explosive pedagogical practice and wide-spread

research topic" (5). In a 1952 *Education* article, Barriss Mills "argued that mass media and communication studies should remain in the composition classroom. Indeed, he called for an 'integrated' course in which the study of journalism, the movies, advertising, television and propaganda analysis might lead to effective writing" (Uchmanowicz 5).

Throughout the 1950s, there was a current of research surrounding "a 'lived experience' model of teaching writing and communications that emphasized the social function of discourse" and advocated "techniques that today might fall under the category of cultural studies in the composition classroom"[10] (Uchmanowicz 6). In 1959, pop culture hit the composition textbook market with Ken Macrorie's *The Perceptive Writer, Reader, and Speaker*, in which he "sought to connect composing processes with critical approaches to 'reading' mass communication, a nexus Macrorie acknowledged in the book by casting radio, television, film, books, magazines, newspapers and advertising as meaningful subjects in which student writers and speakers could take an interest" (Uchmanowicz 6). 1950s popular-culture composition built on progressive and pragmatic education movements from the '30s and '40s; these approaches challenged elite academic traditions, but generally not the status quo beyond the university.

This current of concern with popular culture continued in composition throughout the 1960s, but gained force and a more political inflection toward the end of the decade. Geoffrey Sirc has written extensively about the experimental composition curricula influenced by the Happenings artistic movement and the political flavor of pop-related

[10] Uchmanowicz identifies "popular culture" as a "strand of cultural studies" (7) but makes reference to both the Birmingham Centre and the Popular Culture Association.

publications and conference addresses of the late '60s. Instructors tapped into the popular as a way of engaging with both cultural and academic politics. Sirc explains that "Comp 68 found it difficult to form its expressivist pedagogy exclusive of pop. . . . The popular was perceived as useful compositional material because it altered the established scene of academic writing" ("Never Mind the Tagmemics" 10). The academic scene of the time was influenced by the broader counterculture and an increasingly diverse student body. Expressivist teachers "preached sincerity and relevance at the expense of rules," and even some traditional professors accepted the need to address youth culture.

Popular music was a particular focus as it was closely tied to the political and cultural moment. Sirc cites the example of Fred Kroeger's 1968 suggestion that "Every college teacher ought to tune in to a local popular radio station once in a while, even if he must shudder throughout the whole experience." Despite his personal tastes, Kroeger assigned an analytical essay comparing "Eve of Destruction" with "Dawn of Correction" ("Never Mind the Tagmemics" 10-11). That spring in the *English Journal*, Jerry Walker even recommended that "the bulk of our attention should be devoted to youth culture" (qtd. in Sirc 10). The tone of most 1960s pop pedagogy was celebratory, experimental, and transgressive. This was what Sirc has come to call "Happenings Composition," and it was sympathetic to the aims and attitudes of the popular culture studies movement.

This view was far from universal, however, and Sirc's history describes a palpable backlash against the popular in composition scholarship of the early 1970s. At the 1970 CCCC, Robert Heilman "used his talk to urge composition away from its interest in the trendy" and clearly condemned the use of popular music, saying "The classroom is for criticism . . . and it cannot be wise to attenuate it by the substitution of

sensory experience which the age already supplies in excess" (qtd. in Sirc 11). The stream of positive articles about popular music Heilman was critiquing soon dried up. Perhaps it was because some of the "kookiness" that Sirc describes from happenings composition, such as holding class on the floor in darkened rooms with candles and incense, in the end just didn't make much sense. Perhaps it was because the music scene of the '70s wasn't as conducive to the pedagogical goals of the time. Disco was too vacuous and punk was too threatening to mesh with the cognitive and discursive focus of a field seeking to establish its disciplinarity. According to Sirc, then, "For *CCC*, 1976 can now be recorded as the year the music died" ("Never Mind the Tagmemics" 13).

There was indeed a lull in popular culture-related composition scholarship in the first half of the 1970s. I would argue, however, that even though composition scholars didn't take punk and run with it as Sirc would have wished, they did not turn their backs on the popular. The second half of the '70s actually saw increasing attention to pop culture and increasing debate about the role of popular culture in English studies. In 1975, the *Arizona English Bulletin* devoted an entire issue to popular culture, and in 1976, *English Journal* followed suit. In 1977, *College English* responded with a special issue containing echoes of Heilman's address. The tone of the articles in these issues ranges from celebratory to cautionary, but all seem to recognize pop-culture texts as an increasingly unavoidable part of English studies. Marjorie Smelstor and Carol Weiher begin their article "Using Popular Culture to Teach Composition" quite dramatically: "The popular culture revolution is upon us. In the last few years anthologies, journals, and college classes about popular culture have sprung up at epidemic rates" (42). Scholars and teachers within English departments and publications were clearly divided

about how the epidemic should be treated, however; and the debate is nicely illustrated through a comparison of the March 1976 *English Journal* and the April 1977 *College English*.

The *English Journal* articles are marked by an interesting blend of resignation and enthusiastic idealism. F. Andre Favat, for example, writes, "Hard as it may be to accept . . . it is probably the case that more than plays and poems, it is handbills and headlines, tapes and transcripts, advertisements and articles, letters and laws, menus and manuals which are crucial to our existence" (28). He then discusses a formalist approach to pop texts, highlighting that "the focus of study of non-literary materials is not their content, but their use of language and its strategies" (29). Several passages in Favat's article reveal a pessimistic and somewhat contemptuous attitude toward the masses and their pop culture, but he concludes that all language use is the domain of English studies. English teachers have a responsibility to help their students understand how language functions in the texts they experience most often, if for no other reason than to save them from manipulation.

In another *English Journal* article, Dan Kirby takes a more flippant and favorable approach, arguing that "If English teachers can overcome their reluctance to deal with things 'popular' and can come to see their students as resources rather than souls to save, then classroom studies in popular culture can become exciting joint ventures" (34). Kirby then draws on pop-culture scholars Marshall Fishwick and Susan Koch in his discussion of linguistic and anthropological approaches to pop culture. Smelstor and Weiher also turn to the pop-culture movement, citing Browne and Madden's *The Popular Culture Explosion* and suggesting pedagogical exercises in the formal and structural vein

that was popular in pop-culture scholarship at the time. Richard E. Barbieri offers an extensive bibliography, "Resources for the Study of Popular Culture," to "acquaint English teachers with the general shape of this new field" (36). His final note is quite effusive (and perhaps quite naïve) regarding what these resources can do for English instruction: "Once you have become aware of how to see pop culture, you merely have to look around you to find fresh materials uniquely suited to each class's needs. Nowhere is it easier for teacher and student to share the thrill of exploring new territory . . . limited only by their own consciousness of the cultural resources surrounding them" (40).

A year later, several articles in *College English* sought to temper the exuberance of the "popular culture-ites" with a more critical approach to the politics of mass culture. Guest editor Donald Lazere's "Mass Culture, Political Consciousness, and English Studies" presents the issue as an attempt to balance "against the apolitical or politically eclectic 'popular culture' approach that has dominated much recent American scholarship" in the area (752). For example, Lazere notes that authors who think they are avoiding the political ramifications of popular culture by concentrating on its formal or rhetorical elements "are in effect taking a partisan political position validating the American political and economic status quo by taking for granted and even approving the role of mass culture in it" (754). Lazere chooses to distinguish between affirmative studies of "popular culture" and new left critical studies of "mass culture," noting that he and his colleagues produced this special issue of *College English* as "part of the current movement to legitimize the discussion of socialism in American political, cultural, and academic discourse, through presenting critical perspectives on mass culture under capitalism" (752, 762).

Lazere's linguistic distinction between "popular" and "mass" highlights some of the political and philosophical differences between the popular culture studies movement and the cultural studies movement to be discussed in Chapter Three. "Popular" can connote an active and positive role for the people, but "mass" lacks that democratic flavor and evokes faceless multitudes at the mercy of the oppressive capitalist culture "industry." In keeping with the issue's clear political mission, Lazere proceeds to discuss specific critical approaches to advertising, news reporting, entertainment and recreation that challenge approaches presented by pop-culture scholars and are more in keeping with the leftist agenda of cultural studies. Stanley Aronowitz takes up this thread in "Mass Culture and the Eclipse of Reason: The Implications for Pedagogy." Aronowitz begins with the theories of Max Horkheimer, founder of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, as well as Jurgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse to argue that the greatest danger of mass culture (and the real problem with English composition) "Is a gradual but relentless growth of anti-intellectualism in American life born in part of the traditional antipathy of American ideology to ideas themselves (but this aspect is not new) and partially stemming from the rise of what I will call a visual culture that has increasingly replaced other types of communication, particularly the written and verbal forms" (769). The public's negotiation of these new visual texts is presented not as a new literacy, but as a detriment to traditional literacy and the very act of critical thinking.

Indeed, Aronowitz presents the rise of popular culture and "the proliferation of composition programs at all levels of higher education" as signals of the decline of critical thought in academia and as complicit in the separation of theory and practice promoted by the progressive education movement earlier in the century. Mass culture

has colonized the leisure time of the worker to such an extent that "the capacity of persons to produce their own culture in the widest meaning of the term has become restricted" (771). And "The splitting of composition as a course from the study of literature is of course a sign of its technicization and should be resisted both because it is an attack against critical thought and because it results in the demoralization of teachers and their alienation from work" (772). Aronowitz's concern about the "technicization" of English studies reveals a common contempt for composition teaching. Throughout the '60s and '70s, the canon-busting democratization of culture and the influx of more economically and culturally diverse students who were under-prepared for a traditional liberal arts curriculum challenged the belle-lettristic business as usual of English departments. But the appropriation of cultural criticism allowed academics to maintain the mass/elite split under a rubric of liberating these students rather than openly disdaining them and their culture.

Aronowitz argues that English teachers have a responsibility to teach students how to deconstruct and demystify media messages in order to recognize the pop cultural "mediations of experience that have stood between their conscious activity and the outside world" (773). Once teachers "help students make everyday life and the social world more urgent than the spectacles of the culture industry," they can move on to projects concerning "political, social and cultural issues, and these can be looked at from the perspective of concepts, abstractions, argument, evidence, and the other categories of critical thought" (774). For Aronowitz and many of his colleagues, cultural studies' suspicion regarding the dominant's ideological deployment of the popular became tied to an existing disdain for popular texts as inferior to literary texts. Pop-culture texts are not

valid objects of study in themselves, but rather distractions to move past on the way to important texts and contexts.

College English provides a bibliography, compiled by Lazere, to introduce teachers to texts that offer such critical perspectives on popular culture. Like the *English Journal* bibliography, this resource list includes general categories based on media genres such as television and advertising, and it employs some of the same specific topics like rock music and comic strips. The *College English* list, however, includes politically-oriented sections on semantics, racism, and sexism and it adds a list of publications and organizations for media activism. Only seven works—two of them from the brief "sports" sections—appear on both lists. There are far more citations of well-published critical theorists on Lazere's list, and aside from Cawelti, the big names in the popular culture studies movement are notably absent.

Clearly, some of the distinctions between the treatments of popular culture in these NCTE Journals stem from differences in their audience and purpose; *English Journal* emphasizes classroom practice and is addressed to junior and senior high school teachers as well as college instructors. *College English* is more concerned with theory and, as its title implies, the journal primarily addresses post-secondary teacher-scholars and is associated with the research university mission. Such practical distinctions aside, however, these special issues were representative of an emerging debate about the role of popular culture in English instruction and they established terms and dichotomies that continue to be relevant in contemporary composition scholarship. While the *English Journal* adopted the positive attitude toward American popular culture and scholarship (as well as students' existing critical abilities) that characterized popular culture studies in

the Bowling Green tradition, *College English* privileged the leftist critical approaches, European theory, and activist pedagogical mission characteristic of cultural studies in the Birmingham tradition. Cultural studies thus became the dominant critical approach to popular texts at the post-secondary level. In Chapter Two, I will discuss the ascendancy of cultural-studies approaches in college composition and how they have shaped our scholarship and practice in the last two decades. I will also present more recent scholarship that signals a return of attitudes and approaches that are more in line with early popular culture studies.

Chapter Two

Going in Circles: Recent Locations of Popular Culture in Composition

In this chapter, I will continue the historical overview of popular culture in composition from Chapter One, explaining how the balance of cultural studies and popular culture studies approaches that marked the field until the mid-'80s shifted in favor of specific cultural-studies approaches. I will then present an overview of dominant Berlinian approaches to popular culture in the field before discussing several important weaknesses in current practice suggested by recent scholarship and a review of popular textbooks.

I use "going in circles" for this chapter's title to refer to two aspects of the evolution of popular culture-oriented composition. In the first instance, I have noticed a cyclical pattern in composition scholarship on popular culture. Conference presentations and publications in the field reveal a nearly decennial surge of interest in popular culture topics. And as these topics resurface each decade, the majority of writers rehash the same debates as those before them. Perhaps because compositionists know little about the history of popular culture in English instruction presented in Chapter One, each generation of writing teachers reinvents the pop pedagogy wheel. This may be why, in 2002, Geoffrey Sirc writes that he reads Macrorie's expressivist 1960s work on pop culture in composition "as still delivering the news" (*English* 174). When we consider publications past, it is surprising that some attitudes and approaches seen as progressive

now have been around for so long, and it seems a bit absurd that the field hasn't adopted their suggestions more widely or consistently in the interim. Such is the case with cultural studies and popular culture studies pedagogies from the '60s and '70s. One reason that many useful elements of "old school" popular culture studies and cultural studies fell out of favor was the ascendancy of a particular brand of cultural-studies pedagogy that neglected the formal and affective approaches to popular culture found in earlier composition practice.

Thus, the second sense of "circles," refers to the tendency for compositionists to work in the academic version of social circles or cliques. Some compositionists have aligned themselves with popular culture studies while others are loyal to the cultural studies camp. In our field's drive toward disciplinarity and theoretical sophistication, those in cultural studies have become the "in crowd." (I can almost imagine some writers saying, "I can trace my roots back to England," or "Why, yes, I'm a Berlinian–of the Purdue Berlinians.") However, some recent work in a more anti-establishment vein has been looking back to pop-comp's transgressive roots for possible alternatives to the current cultural studies hegemony in composition. Partisan tendencies within academia have prompted many scholars to present the critical and political differences between cultural studies and popular culture studies in negative terms while ignoring how the productive similarities and differences between the two movements could inform popular culture-oriented English pedagogies.

Pop-based Composition's Left Turn

In a pattern reminiscent of the late '60s and early '70s, the heated debates of the late '70s discussed in the first chapter were followed by a lull in popular culture scholarship during the first half of the 1980s while the field of composition turned more of its attention toward expressivism and the process movement. Later in the decade, however, popular culture resurfaced in composition's publications and conferences. In *English Journal* articles from 1987 and 1988, we find positive attitudes toward examining popular culture in the writing classroom, but it is clear that the more critical approaches championed by *College English* a decade before had begun to dominate the field. Throughout the late '80s and early '90s, pop culture was brought into the classroom primarily as part of the cultural studies movement that was becoming increasingly popular in English departments.

In the *English Journal* article "Composition and Popular Culture: From Mindless Consumers to Critical Writers," Veleda Boyd and Marilyn Robitaille discuss a variety of assignments designed "to help students explore the mimetic characteristics of popular culture and to analyze the appeals, claims, and techniques used in advertising. Students will classify specific roles of characters in movies and television and identify target audiences of magazines and evaluate the legitimacy of the media's representation of male and female role models" (51). While their opposition of "critical" and "mindless" consumption and questions about the "legitimacy" of representations are inflected by cultural studies, Boyd and Robitaile's pedagogical suggestions do not otherwise employ or promote the theories or methods linked with that field. Instead, the only theorist they cite is John Cawelti, who is aligned with the popular culture studies movement, and their

lesson plans reflect the formal and structural text-based methods more common in popular culture studies. In fact, however, teachers would need little or no background in cultural studies or popular culture studies to enact the proposed pedagogy.

In the November 1988 *English Journal*, Roslyn Z. Weedman argues that a mass-culture themed college English class can be very relevant and successful, but "In order to avoid a reductive approach, the teacher designing the course must do some research into mass culture" (96). She then provides a brief overview of several useful sources that includes John Cawelti as well as cultural studies notables such as Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, Walter Benjamin, and Laura Mulvey. Weedman presents several benefits of deploying such research on mass culture in the writing class, such as "increased student motivation," the "accessibility of primary resources to students and ourselves, the desirability of encouraging students to come to terms with their own authority and experience, and perhaps even the obligation to understand the countless images confronting us daily" (97). She does not, however, directly promote the more critical or political project of cultural studies—a reticence illustrated by the "perhaps even" phrase.

For a more vocal endorsement of the cultural studies project, readers could turn to John Trimbur's "Cultural Studies and Teaching Writing," also published in the fall of 1988, which served as cultural studies' official entrée into the composition community (George and Trimbur, Langstraat). Trimbur's statement of purpose eloquently summarizes his main points as well as the tenor of the cultural studies and composition movement at the time:

> The purpose of this essay is to give voice to what I take to be an emerging revisionist current in rhetoric and composition studies—the sense that we need to revise teaching and research in order to disclose the possibilities of critical and emancipatory literacy practices. The new political sensibility I refer to takes shape at this point as a multidimensional, non-doctrinaire manifesto, a kind of left-wing poststructuralist language collage, indebted as much to Foucault as to Marx, calling on writing teachers to demystify the ideological assumptions that pervade our thinking about literacy, to scrutinize the figures of thought and disciplinary practices that have dominated the teaching of writing, to redefine the classroom as a site of cultural reproduction and resistance, to empower students to act as critical agents capable of making their own history. (5)

Trimbur's depiction of cultural approaches as a significant emergent current of research and practice in composition is supported in the Spring 1989 *Rhetoric Review*. The Symposium "What Are We Doing as a Research Community?"—based on the inaugural 1988 CCCC Research Network—features a section on "Cultural Criticism" by Patricia Bizzell. Bizzell, like Trimbur, sets a lofty goal for cultural studies composition:

> I hope that the activity of cultural criticism will foster social justice by making people aware of politically motivated ideological concealments. Underlying this hope are two assumptions, that the present social order is unjust, and that becoming aware of how injustice is protected and promulgated ideologically will enable people better to resist and change it. (225)

Thus both writers promote the explicitly activist goals of the broader cultural studies project. Both also recognize how this project must be tailored to the specific conditions of American writing instruction.

Trimbur delineates four reasons or preconditions for the "emergent political discourse" within composition studies that he and Bizzell describe. One is the "return of the sixties," not only "in the commodified form of fashion, music, books, television series, and media events reuniting former campus radicals," but also as "a return of political desire" ("Cultural" 6). Trimbur also notes that many of the campus radicals from twenty years before were now tenured professors, and that some of these professors had driven and/or were benefiting from the improved material conditions of composition studies, which he cites as the second reason for the political climate of writing instruction in the mid- to late-'80s. The third precondition, also connected to English department politics, was the "crisis of the canon" that emerged from the battle over content between Reaganite conservatives like E.D. Hirsch, William J. Bennett and Allen Bloom and a cadre of more liberal critics engaged in the recovery and promotion of women's writing, multicultural American texts, and non-Western works. Finally, Trimbur points to "post-poststructural currents of critical theory" that questioned the political efficacy of deconstruction and "involved a radical de-centering of the self" (6-8).

Trimbur then draws directly on these conditions in setting an agenda for cultural-studies composition in the '90s. For example, he makes an implicit connection between English studies' efforts to explode the canon and cultural studies' efforts to "re-present the working class, women, Blacks, the young and the old, the powerless" and argues (quoting Richard Johnson) the need for compositionists "to become more popular rather

than more academic" ("Cultural" 10). This was a tricky directive for composition scholars seeking greater academic status, but Trimbur suggests "a step away from the academic reproduction of scholarship and careers and toward a re-representation of reading and writing as potentially subversive and liberatory activities," and stresses the "need to resist the seduction of textual expertise and to link accounts of reading to the history of ordinary readers" (11). In this respect, I would argue that much of the popular culture-based composition pedagogies of the '90s failed to meet Trimbur's standards; while critical reading became an important component of liberatory pedagogy, most research and practice consisted only of experts telling students how they should critique texts within a specific theoretical or ideological framework rather than asking students how they consume texts and what that consumption means to them. The field may have been better served if it had looked to popular culture studies as well as cultural studies for models of studies based on and/or directed to the needs of ordinary readers.

Trimbur does, however, articulate a variety of concerns that would be taken up consistently in the cultural-studies composition scholarship of the following decade. Among these is the desire to make literacy and communication instruction "into a means of liberation, not domestication" by helping students "destigmatize their own cultural experience" and by embracing more democratic pedagogical practices ("Cultural" 14-15). Beyond teaching correctness and style, Trimbur argues for teaching "the language of critique" and he writes that, beyond formal or rhetorical studies of texts, "we need cultural studies of textuality to help students identify the subjective forms they inhabit and how the images and narratives of mass video culture constitute youth and gender, race and class, through their lived daily experience" ("Cultural"16). In doing so, he urges

teachers "to avoid reinforcing the cynicism of the post-Watergate generation—and in turn the seductions of the negative hermeneutics of deconstruction and demystification as the end of our own practices" (16-17). The call to liberation, the mantra of class, gender and race, and the tension between optimism and cynicism presented by Trimbur are echoed in many of the texts from the '90s that I will discuss in the remainder of this chapter. Indeed, there are echoes of Trimbur's article in even the most recent work in the field.

In addition to these concerns, Bizzell sets an agenda for composition studies that includes making students' writing, the composition classroom, and academic discourse the objects of cultural criticism. Within such studies, "the writing a student produces can be interpreted as a culturally situated effort at meaning-making rather than a tissue of errors" (226). Cultural criticism can "tease out the conventions that work in professional academic writing to generate and legitimate knowledge" and writing teachers can share such knowledge with their students through writing instruction that recognizes that bridging the gaps between students' existing literacies and this specialized academic literacy is about more than technical skills (227). Though my current project does not deal with them directly, a variety of studies have taken up such cultural studies of student and academic writing.

Of greater concern for the present discussion are Bizzell's concluding comments about the obstacles facing cultural criticism in composition. The two issues Bizzell saw as "the most urgent unfinished business in [her] scholarly agenda" were the field's discomfort with the political implications of cultural criticism and its lack of clear practical guidance for incorporating cultural criticism in the classroom. She notes in particular rhetorical scholars' "wish to retain a belief that our understanding of the

rhetorical nature of things allows us to transcend them" and the profession's ambivalence about our social and political obligations (229). Along with these important theoretical and philosophical issues, Bizzell argues that "the present lack of a coherent method of cultural criticism that can be broadly applied" represents a critical gap in composition pedagogy. She concludes, "I most need to see how one could teach it, how one could bring cultural criticism into the writing classroom" (229-230). Scholars throughout the following decade addressed each of these elements, although very few works attempted to address Bizzell's political/theoretical and methodological/practical concerns equally.

The majority of cultural-studies composition scholarship before and since Trimbur and Bizzell charted the area has been characterized by a notable theory-practice split—nodding to one aspect while concentrating almost exclusively on the other. Work in popular culture and composition from the late '80s on can also be divided into that which directly connects itself to cultural studies (whether appropriately or no) and that which does not, with the attendant distinctions of status that privilege the theoretical over the practical and the political and methodological commitments of cultural studies over those traditionally associated with the popular culture studies movement. This is not surprising in light of the tone set for research in our discipline by Stephen North's 1987 *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, which gives rather short shrift to practitioners and their lore. Likewise, the increasing dominance of cultural studies theories and methods in English departments and compositionists' need to impress their literary colleagues contributed to a marginalization of the pop-culture methods rejected by many of the academic elite.

Thus, after the late '80s, research on popular culture in composition both did and did not experience another lull as it had in the previous decades. On one hand, popular culture remained in the classroom and in the journals because of the cultural studies boom, but the more positive or celebratory approaches of the '60s and '70s went underground. Teachers were still using pop texts for all of the reasons mentioned in the *English Journal* articles discussed in Chapter One, but research related to these practices essentially stalled. This stagnation (as well as the decennial cycle of interest in this area) is represented in two *ERIC Digest* articles written by the same author, Nola Kortner Aiex, and published in 1988 and 1999, respectively. In both articles, Aiex makes the same points about how popular culture generates student interest and reaches different types of learners, about how film and television can target and motivate writing, and how such media are well suited for linking interdisciplinary perspectives. In several instances, the same language (word for word) is recycled. The articles also rely on many of the same sources, and it is worth noting that none of the references listed from after 1989 were from prominent journals. Most of the new sources were conference presentations or classroom guides. In 1997 and '98, however, new approaches to pop culture in composition and references to the abandoned pop-comp tradition would begin to surface in book chapters and journals like *CCC*.

One reason for the late-'80s status split was that the academic climate of the time emphasized only the differences between cultural studies and popular culture studies. In his introduction to the 1988 CCCC Research Network Symposium, Charles Bazerman notes the tendency for each author to take "a somewhat embattled stance, as though his or her particular approach is not being accepted for what it is and can do" (224). Likewise,

compositionists seeking to validate their own approaches to popular culture have often made the distinctions between theory and practice or cultural studies and popular culture studies seem more significant than they are or should be. Rather than falling neatly into two camps, most composition pedagogy involving popular culture tends to fall somewhere between the theoretical and practical, the overtly political and seemingly neutral, the cynical and idealistic. In 1991, John Schilb recognized that this diversity of approaches in composition studies actually makes it a particularly apt home for cultural studies; "Because the field currently comprises diverse topics and methods and has ties to numerous disciplines, it can analyze broad social questions better than literary studies can," and "Composition can embody the pre-occupation with discourse associated with cultural studies and postmodernism" (176).

Early '90s composition did provide fertile soil, but some scholars were concerned about the kind of cultural studies it was growing. Cary Nelson's "Always Already Cultural Studies: Two Conferences and a Manifesto" articulates a number of problems caused by the meteoric rise of cultural studies in composition. Nelson, writing in 1991, cited a number of conference presentations and discussions from 1988 to 1990 as evidence that "of all the intellectual movements that have swept the humanities in America over the last twenty years, none will be taken up so shallowly, so opportunistically, so unreflectively, and so ahistorically as cultural studies" (25). Nelson complains that many English scholars use cultural studies as "a way of repackaging what we were already doing," that they do not understand the history of cultural studies or locate themselves in relation to the Birmingham school, and that by ignoring this

tradition, we "depoliticize a concept whose whole prior history has been preeminently political and oppositional" (25-26).

In an effort to challenge the dilution and hybridization of cultural studies as it is integrated into composition studies, Nelson delivers a fourteen-point manifesto delimiting what cultural studies is and what it is not. Regarding popular culture, he writes:

> Cultural studies does not, as some people believe, require that every project involve the study of artifacts of popular culture. On the other hand, people with ingrained contempt for popular culture can never fully understand the cultural studies project. In part that is because cultural studies has traditionally been deeply concerned with how all cultural production is sustained and determined by (and in turn influences) the broad terrain of popular common sense. (31)

Though it goes unstated, an important message here is that cultural studies *is not* popular culture studies. Popular texts obviously fall within the purview of cultural studies, but so do more elite cultural texts. And the distinguishing feature is that texts of whatever type are approached as sites of ideological contestation; "Thus the analysis of an individual text, discourse, behavior, ritual, style, genre, or subculture does not constitute cultural studies unless the thing analyzed is considered in terms of its competitive, reinforcing, and determining relations with other objects and cultural forces" (32).

Cultural studies, likewise, *is not* just another name for critical theory. Nelson criticizes James Berlin for promoting the latter misconception in a 1990 statement "that he was simply giving critical theory a new name, that cultural studies would miraculously turn our attention toward 'textuality in all its forms'" (25). While Nelson is justified in

trying to maintain the complexity and commitments of cultural studies, he should not be surprised that compositionists tend to narrow the field to textuality (texts are what we do for a living) or that we might truncate contextual and political explorations (we can't fit many in-depth, conjunctural projects into a semester). Thus, in spite of Nelson's objections, Berlin's cultural-studies composition paradigm became far more influential in the field than stricter cultural studies definitions from the Birmingham tradition. With the ascendancy of Berlinian models of cultural-studies pedagogy, alternative approaches to popular culture received less attention, and research and teaching grounded in popular culture studies were almost completely ignored.

Berlin and the Popular Path

In "Cultural Studies and Its Impact on Composition," David Leight writes that "Most of the work in composition studies that has investigated cultural studies comes either from or through Berlin" (2). Leight discusses two approaches that are representative of the union of composition and cultural studies. One approach, as advocated by John Trimbur, is defined by an interest in popular culture and "suggests that cultural studies should concentrate on popular issues to help students find a sense of agency" (2). Trimbur discusses his version of cultural-studies composition in "Composition Studies: Postmodern or Popular," where he claims that the unifying feature of the work of Birmingham thinkers like Hoggart, Williams, Grossberg, Hebdige and Radway is its portrayal of "spectators and consumers not only as subject positions created by the discursive apparatus of the state, the media, and the culture industry, but also as active interpreters of their own experience who use the cultural practices and productions

they encounter differentially and for their own purposes" (127). The goal of composition pedagogy influenced by this approach is to help students become more active and astute in their interpretation of cultural texts and contexts so that they may better serve their own interests.

Another approach, promoted by Berlin, is defined by "unmasking of ideologies and consideration of power relationship" (Leight 2). Berlin's version of cultural-studies composition, which I will discuss in more detail, shaped the development of social-epistemic rhetoric as a philosophy of composing based on the argument "that the writing subject is a discursive construction, the subject serving as a point of conjuncture for a plethora of discourses—a rich variety of texts inscribed in the persona of the individual" ("Composition" 108). The goal of composition pedagogy influenced by this approach is to help students see how their subjectivities are being constructed by a network of discourses and how they "may act in and through these discourses, working to change them and the material conditions they mediate in one's experience" ("Composition" 108). According to Leight, "Berlin wishes to describe ideologies so that students might make power relationships more equitable, while Trimbur wishes to find ways in which students can take advantage of the power relationships that ideologies invoke" (2). To summarize the distinction in terms of their political goals, Trimbur aims to transform the student while Berlin aims to transform society.

So, contrary to Nelson's reading, Leight's description locates Berlin's project well within the goals of traditional cultural studies. Perhaps "well within" is the operative phrase; Berlin emphasizes specific aspects of cultural studies, namely those that jive with his social-epistemic rhetoric, while disregarding some of the larger conjunctural

considerations that define the fuller cultural studies project. At times Berlin is ambivalent about aspects of the cultural studies project, and he makes a point of establishing a clear and non-dependant relationship between composition studies and cultural studies. In "Composition Studies and Cultural Studies," for example, Berlin writes "I cannot emphasize too strongly, however, that I will in no sense suggest that cultural studies is to be considered a deliverer come to save writing teachers from the errors of their ways." (100). In an approximation of the "we've been doing this all along" attitude Nelson complains of, Berlin then points out how "Composition studies, since its formation in college English departments a hundred years ago, has in many of its manifestations attempted to become a variety of cultural studies" (102). He notes the examples of expressivism and social constructionism, which promoted democratic, context-based and political approaches to English studies, but then argues that these previous attempts and many current works in composition fall short of cultural studies because of their limited scope and timidity about real political engagement. Thus, while insisting on a separate cultural-studies heritage for English studies, Berlin repeatedly privileges approaches in the Birmingham vein, either directly or tacitly. In an effort to explain Berlin's cultural-studies agenda and its contradictions, and because Berlin's work has been so influential in our field, I want take a closer look at his version of cultural-studies composition.

It is useful to start from the broad strokes of Berlin and Vivion's tightly packed "Introduction: A Provisional Definition" from their 1992 anthology *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom*, which merits a somewhat lengthy summary and can be read alongside Berlin's solo publications. Berlin and Vivion begin by invoking the Birmingham School's poststructuralist definition of culture "both as the signifying

practices that represent experience in language, myth, and literature and as the relatively autonomous responses of human agents to concrete historical conditions" (ix). Berlin and Vivion also reference Stuart Hall, Richard Johnson, Raymond Williams, and John Fiske in defining a cultural-studies approach that is concerned with how signifying practices shape subjectivity and "deals with the productions, distribution and reception of signifying practices within the myriad historical formations that are shaping subjectivities" (ix). This approach also emphasizes the negotiation of cultural codes within always-ideological semiotic systems (x). Next the editors discuss how cultural studies disrupts the existing poetic-rhetoric relation in English departments by eradicating distinctions or collapsing boundaries between disinterested and interested, private and public, contemplative and active, creative and imitative, and by recognizing that "aesthetic judgments are closely related to class distinctions, so that all texts are inevitably involved in political contentions" (xi). The rhetoric-poetic relation would occupy Berlin for the rest of his life.

In adopting these definitions, Berlin and Vivion do not distinguish the cultural studies of contemporary composition from any other project within cultural studies. They take that step in the following section, "Some Provisional Practices," in which they promote a diversity of approaches and reject attempts "to more clearly stake out the disciplinary ground of *a* cultural studies" (xii). Berlin and Vivion also argue for the need to "construct programs and practices with a uniquely American flavor" tailored specifically to curriculum and instruction (xiii). Berlin and Vivion promote the classroom as "a site for working out the theoretical, practical, and political issues identified in the current debates over English and cultural studies," as "a proving ground for the

reformulation of the relationship between theory and practice," and as a place where "cultural studies as a way of looking at the world becomes inseparable from pedagogy. Students cannot learn *about* cultural studies: they can only learn to *do* cultural studies" (xii, xiv). They also emphasize that, in teaching students to perform such cultural critiques, educators must heed the "difference between the politics of critique that argues existing institutions must become part of the dialectic of examination, and the politics of revolution that argues existing institutions must be changed in pre-ordained ways" (xv). This marks a key difference in classroom practice between analyzing how ideology functions and promoting a specific ideology—a difference that was the subject of significant debate in the composition scholarship of the early '90s.[11]

Though many instructors and courses have fallen short of Berlin and Vivion's vision of cultural-studies composition on the theoretical, practical, or political level, this introduction and the essays that followed inspired a generation of teachers and greatly influenced the shape of composition studies in the '90s. The issues of subjectivity, signifying practices, and the inseparable relationship between rhetoric and ideology covered here surface in a number of Berlin's publications, including "Composition and Cultural Studies: Collapsing the Boundaries," and "Poststructuralism, Cultural Studies, and the Composition Classroom: Postmodern Theory in Practice."

[11] Indeed, many debated whether such political discussions were appropriate in the classroom at all. The most vocal opponent of the increasingly popular critical and cultural studies pedagogies at the time was Maxine Hairston, whose 1992 CCC article "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing" has remained a touchstone text in the ongoing debates about politics and pedagogy. Hairston complains that left-oriented critical approaches to writing instruction put "dogma before diversity, politics before craft, ideology before critical thinking, and the social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the student" (660). While many shared Hairston's concerns, many also found her contemptuous and condescending treatment of several respected thinkers in the field quite problematic.

The latter article also includes an expanded discussion about the role of the composition teacher as a public intellectual, transformative political agent, mediator, and researcher. In Berlin's perspective, "all teachers of rhetoric and composition are regarded as intellectuals engaging in theoretical and empirical research, the two coming to fruition in their interaction within the classroom" ("Poststructuralism" 25). Berlin particularly supports teacher-researchers who pursue the aforementioned goal of tailoring cultural studies to composition curricula and instruction. In "Composition Studies and Cultural Studies: Collapsing the Boundaries," Berlin follows Johnson's rubric of production-based, text-based, and lived experience-based studies—"a model that corresponds generally with the rhetorical model of communication described by figures as diverse as Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, and Andrea Lunsford" (113)—in his overview of works in composition that apply cultural-studies methods to pedagogical and institutional problems. It isn't surprising that this positive image of the teacher-researcher became popular with composition instructors working against the marginalized role of practitioners at the time.

Another element of Berlin's work that gained currency in composition scholarship is his promotion of a dialogic classroom "designed to encourage students to become transformative intellectuals in their own right" ("Poststructuralism" 26). Berlin describes one course in which he helps students achieve this status by providing "a set of heuristics (invention strategies) that grow out of the interaction of rhetoric, structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, and cultural studies" which they apply first to a variety of texts (essays, film, television programs) and then to their own experiences ("Poststructuralism" 27-29). The ultimate goal is for the student to gain a greater

understanding of "the entire semiotic context in which she is functioning" in order to increase "the likelihood that her text will serve as a successful intervention in an ongoing discussion" ("Poststructuralism" 31). This interventionist goal and the introduction of popular media later became central features in the work of Berlin's students, which will be discussed below.

Berlin's classroom makes use of a variety of media, but his work tends to privilege the analysis of written texts. For example, he describes a unit on education that includes reading essays written "by a diverse range of observers: William Bennett, Jonathon Kozol, John Dewey, and James Thurber," and viewing a film, *Risky Business* or *Sixteen Candles* or *Breakfast Club* and a videotape of a television program, such as *Beverly Hills 90210,* that deal with school experiences ("Poststructuralism" 27). First, I must question Berlin's definition of diversity, as all of these essayists are college-educated white American men and the films and television show represent middle- to upper-class white suburban teens. Next, it is noteworthy that the essays not only outnumber non-print texts but also precede them, so they will naturally shape the viewing and interpretation of the visual texts. Students' analyses of these texts are also shaped by Berlin's heuristics, which are based on "reading in Saussure, Pierce, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and others" (27). Based on this description, Berlin's pedagogy could be criticized for focusing on the interpretation of texts more than on student writing, a significant concern about cultural-studies pedagogies later voiced by Kristin Blair, among others.

The relation between students analyzing extant written texts and producing their own is another topic that Berlin addresses in "Poststructuralism." One passage discusses

the "interchangeability of reading and writing" and argues that "interpretation involves production as well as reproduction, and is as constructive as composing itself" (31). Berlin's enthusiastic presentation of this interchangeability stems from his belief that by employing interpretive heuristics students will gain an understanding about the culturally coded nature of the texts they read, and will then "discover the culturally coded character of all parts of composing" (30). Thus, they can shape their essays based on appropriate genre codes and edit them to meet social and political codes. Berlin extends and clarifies the constructive connection between interpretation and production in his later work *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, in which he argues for a refigured English studies. "The materials and methods of all courses should be organized around text interpretation *and* construction—not, as previously, one or the other exclusively—leading to a revised conception of both reading and writing as acts of textual production" (xxi).

Regarding textual production, Berlin's early '90s articles focus almost exclusively on traditional essay writing. In "Poststructuralism," Berlin does make brief mention of non-essayistic texts: "(Students could also be asked to create other kinds of texts—short stories, poems, videos—although we have not done so in our composition course. Here the genre codes of each would again be foregrounded)" (30). But this is a parenthetical comment that once more privileges the traditional interpretive and literary models of the English department above the less academic creative forms. Again, he follows up on the matter in *Rhetoric, Poetics and Cultures*, where he describes experiments with "students producing their own short video-taped productions. The point in doing so is to enable them to see the immensely complex coding system involved in producing the effect found in even the most pedestrian television programming" (128). It is notable that this

discussion from the "Into the Classroom" chapter also contains a more extended discussion of film and television texts, which reflects an increasing recognition of the power of popular culture in Berlin's courses and in composition curricula in general. Even by introducing limited student production of non-print texts, Berlin was ahead of his time, as compositionists have only recently begun encouraging their students to employ advancing technologies in photography, video, and software to produce more multimedia texts and visual arguments. Berlin's practices on this front and in other areas of composition pedagogy, as well as his suggestions and predictions for the future of English studies, continue to influence composition studies.

This influence is felt in part through the work of Berlin's graduate students who have adopted and adapted his insights and methods. These students bring us to the next stop on our cyclical path, a cluster of articles from 1997 and '98. Bruce McComiskey's 1997 *JAC* article "Social-Process Rhetorical Inquiry: Cultural Studies Methodologies for Critical Writing about Advertisements," critiques Berlin's heuristic for focusing on "production criticism," but embraces and expands on Berlin's goal of intervention by having his students write letters to encourage interested parties to change undesirable advertising practices. McComiskey echoes Richard Johnson and Berlin himself in his critique that most cultural-studies approaches to composition "are limited in their theoretical and practical scope, engaging students in short-sighted concentration on just a single 'moment' in the cycle of cultural production, contextual distribution, and critical consumption" (4). By emphasizing all three moments of the cycle equally, McComiskey more fully enacts the conjuncturalist approach of cultural studies.

McComiskey also tweaks the materialist production cycle in order to "propose a cyclical model of the writing process, one that accounts for the composing strategies of individual and collaborative writers as well as the socio-discursive lives of texts" ("Social-Process" 2). This model is an example of how cultural-studies methods can be successfully appropriated to meet specific goals in the teaching of writing. Cultural-studies pedagogies too often neglect the composing side of composition, but in his *JAC* article, as well as in "Postmodern Cultural Studies and the Politics of Writing Instruction" and *Teaching Composition as a Social Process,* McComiskey presents accessible and balanced discussions of his version of cultural-studies composition. For these reasons, I will devote more attention to McComiskey's work in Chapter Four.

But first, I want to extend this discussion of Berlin's influence in the late '90s and introduce some of the post-Berlinian and aside-from-Berlinian currents in more recent articles on composition and popular culture. I take the term "post-Berlinian" from Michelle Sidler and Richard Morris, two of Berlin's graduate students who describe how they have adapted and expanded on his philosophy and heuristics in their 1998 *JAC* article "Writing in a Post-Berlinian Landscape: Cultural Composition in the Classroom." Two points of expansion that I find relevant to my current project and to the future of composition studies pertain to the types of texts students are encouraged to produce, and to how cultural-studies heuristics can guide students in producing those texts. First, Sidler and Morris extend cultural studies' recognition of cultural artifacts and processes as texts (found in works by Berlin as well as Aronowitz, Shor, and others) into a concept of culture as a composition. The "formal 'Composition' genres currently taught in classrooms" are "but one aspect of composition . . . . The question here should be: why

are we teaching certain types of composition instead of embracing a larger classroom definition of composition?" (277). Next, Sidler and Morris argue that while Berlin and most instructors after him have primarily appended cultural-studies concerns to traditional essays and genres of academic writing, "Cultural composition entails more than just choosing whether or not to include popular culture as a paper topic or two; it entails a new approach to all facets of writing" (278).

One element of this new approach (which they share with McComiskey) involves applying cultural-studies heuristics to the writing process. In particular, Sidler and Morris follow the path Berlin was on before his death that extends the cultural-studies writing process from invention to arrangement. They argue that arrangement "is an ideological act, always implicated in and tied to systems of production and consumption, but in this age of technology, also particularly involved in systems of re-creation, exchange, and distribution" (285). They go further to collapse the distinction between invention and arrangement in a move that echoes Berlin's conflation of interpretation and text production. In Sidler and Morris's cultural-studies heuristic, students examine surface and subsurface features and identify an opposition or problematic in an insight they term the "analytic leap." The student then identifies a "line of action," for the application or intervention they will pursue. In doing so, the student needs to consider what form the intervention will take, which involves "selections from the available technology for each type of arrangement, choices about the medium through which the message is best communicated, decisions about the type of language and design possible with each cultural arrangement, and choices about how the message would most effectively be distributed" (285).

Deliberations about what to say and how to say it are inextricably linked to one another and to the interpretive processes that spark the communicative act. In a true cultural-studies pedagogy, decisions regarding content, arrangement, style, distribution, etc. are based on the student's contexts and interests—not dictated by traditional English forms; "Composition can include other types of cultural arrangements such as those found in popular media or in a variety of academic disciplines" (Sidler and Morris 287). Even though the consumption and interpretation of cultural studies and popular culture content have become commonplace in composition classrooms, instructors and administrators have been reluctant to make this leap toward the production of alternative texts. However, the increasing availability of multimedia technologies, the blurring of disciplinary boundaries throughout academia, and the continuing devaluation of essayistic literacy in the culture beyond the university will likely move our field in this direction soon.

The Road Less Traveled

Before considering the future, though, let's take a short step back to 1997, when a range of cultural studies and quasi-cultural studies approaches to pop materials were presented in the anthology *Miss Grundy Doesn't Teach Here Anymore: Popular Culture and the Composition Classroom*. This anthology reflects not only the wide-spread and diverse use of pop culture in '90s composition classrooms, but also the potential and problems that mark so much popular culture-oriented pedagogy. The collection also represents what I referred to above as "aside-from-Berlinian" approaches to popular culture and cultural studies. Of the fourteen essays included, only one cites Berlin, and

that is in reference to the *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom* anthology edited by Berlin and Vivion. One other essay cites John Trimbur. This certainly seems to contradict David Leight's estimation of Berlin and Trimbur's monopoly in the field. Instead, these essays tap into cultural-studies content that isn't filtered through English studies. Quite a few of the collection's contributors referenced authors in the Birmingham tradition such as Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Douglas Kellner, and Angela McRobbie. Theorists Barthes, Baudrillard, and Burke were mentioned on several occasions, and multiple authors cited the work of Stanley Aronowitz and, especially, Henry Giroux.[12]

In discussing the theoretical influences of the authors in *Miss Grundy*, I must point out that the essays in this collection are quite diverse in regard to theoretical complexity, outside research, and overall development. The articles range in length from five to eighteen pages, and while one author cites only one outside source, another includes three full pages of notes and citations. All of the essays discuss classroom practices, but some are brief descriptions of specific lesson plans or assignments while others describe entire courses or approaches to composition. The collection should not be

[12] Compositionists draw on the work of Giroux and Aronowitz, in part, because there is so much to draw from. Henry Giroux has been an amazingly proliferate writer, authoring or co-authoring 31 books, 265 articles, and 153 book chapters and introductions; he has also edited or co-edited eight anthologies and six journal issues. Aronowitz has written 17 books and over 200 articles for journals, magazines, and newspapers on many of the same issues. Most of this extensive body of work centers on issues pertaining to relationships between education and popular culture, cultural studies, critical theory, and/or politics. These authors, along with Paulo Freire, Donald Macedo, and Ira Shor form a school of critical theory and practice based in cultural studies and devoted to liberatory pedagogy. I recognize these works as rich and influential alternative sources for compositionists engaging with cultural studies and popular culture; however, I will not delve into the specific writings in this vein because my focus here is on scholarship in college composition, while their works are generally anchored in education and sociology and emphasize primary and secondary educational institutions (or in Freire's case, non-institutional pedagogical contexts for adult education). This elision would no doubt trouble Giroux and his colleagues who promote an interdisciplinary "border-pedagogy," but the scope of this study dictates certain reductions and omissions.

dismissed as uneven, however. What the essays have in common is that they are all written by non-tenured instructors, and they all represent (though some more successfully than others) a brand of scholarship editor Diane Penrod describes as "theory-lore":

> Part theory, part lore, the discussions in this collection reflect a movement to a genre of teacher-talk we might call "theory-lore," in which newly trained composition instructors move beyond simple anecdotal talk of classroom practices to more theoretically informed ideas about how those classroom incidents affect student writing and the production of knowledge. (19)

This type of research offers a potential solution to the theory-practice split that has marked composition scholarship related to cultural studies and popular culture since the late '70s. But while these essays may intend to tackle some problems in this area, they unintentionally reflect other tensions within current pop-culture pedagogy. One such tension is instructor ambivalence about popular culture. In "Expatriating Students from their Television Homelands: The Defamiliarization of Pop Culture," Sanford Tweedie discusses how he could have been limited in enacting a pop/cultural-studies pedagogy analysis of television programming because he does not own or watch television himself. Instead, he devised an assignment in which students were asked to investigate their own attitudes about television, conduct research on the benefits and drawbacks of viewing, and then write a letter to him in which they explain why he should or should not purchase a TV for his family. Tweedie notes that in wording the assignment and structuring this inquiry he wanted to avoid pushing students into a predetermined position; he argues that some popular culture-based assignments preclude honest explorations through loaded

language/questions and a reductive limitation to imagined academic audiences. Tweedie also claims that these directive approaches most often assume negative stances on the influence of media and pop culture.

Indeed, even Diane Penrod, who promotes cultural studies and popular culture in her research and teaching, seems to suggest that the consumption of pop-culture texts has a direct and negative effect on the ability to think:

> The question composition instructors face is a perplexing one: How do we teach critical inquiry to students increasingly steeped in powerful, visualized, commercialized readings of the world? A Burkean response to this question might be to practice homeopathy and apply, in small controlled doses, those elements that have created the "illness." In other words, instructors can use pop culture as a "corrective" by injecting controlled doses of it into the intellectual world of the composition classroom. (15)

When reading this passage, I couldn't help but hear echoes from ten and twenty years before when articles like "From *Mindless* Consumers to Critical Writers" and "Mass Culture and the *Eclipse of Reason*" presented pop culture as a brain-wasting epidemic from which students needed to be rescued. These ongoing attitudes seem to suggest that without pedagogical intervention, students inevitably fall victim to some sort of learned thoughtlessness.

But in another essay, Jeffrey Maxson writes that "the most important contribution of cultural studies to pedagogy [is] a view of students as competent consumers of mass-cultural products, who are already—before the intervention of any pedagogy—using

these materials in important ways to structure and make meaningful their everyday experience" (94). In its best manifestations, cultural-studies composition recognizes students as critical agents whose acquaintance with popular-culture texts can make them more—not less—likely to consume them in thoughtful ways. Shelli B. Fowler also counters negative attitudes toward students' familiarity with pop content and presents popular-culture texts as aids to critical thinking. In "Tracy Chapman in the Writing Classroom: Challenging Culturally Sanctioned Assumptions," Fowler discusses how most of her students were confused about and/or resistant to a queer theory reading of a traditional poem, but became more comfortable with such critical readings after they were able, "as readers/interpreters of the song as text, to recognize the complex intersections of sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and racial identity" (114). There are several potential weaknesses in Fowler's pedagogy, which I will discuss in Chapter Four. For now, I'll just note that while this is a valid integration of popular culture into the English studies classroom, this article does not describe an approach that is "doing cultural studies" in the Birmingham tradition.

Several essays in this volume approach traditional cultural studies or enact quasi- or pseudo-cultural studies, but several others really have nothing to do with cultural studies *per se*. This does not mean that these essays or pedagogies are inferior. I note the distinction because Penrod's preface refers to "the cultural studies pedagogies presented in this volume" (x), and several of the authors use "popular culture" and "culture studies" interchangeably. This offers further evidence of the terminological confusion about cultural studies and the dilution of its critical project in English studies. In addition to (or perhaps in opposition to) this negative reading, however, the pedagogies presented here

remind us that the cultural studies hegemony in scholarship has not necessarily extended to the classroom. These essays may also indicate that composition is ready for a revival and expansion of useful popular culture studies methods. Popular culture studies has consistently been concerned with pedagogy, and with clear writing. Considering that the Popular Culture Association maintains areas in "Popular Culture, Rhetoric and Composition" and "Popular Culture and Education/Teaching and History," compositionists should indeed examine how popular culture studies might fill gaps in the classroom practice of cultural studies-based approaches.

While some articles in the *Miss Grundy* collection unknowingly engage in the methods of old school popular culture studies, Geoffrey Sirc's 1997 *CCC* article "Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where's the Sex Pistols?" intentionally taps into the structure of feeling that characterized late-'60s popular culture studies and composition. Here and in his later works, Sirc celebrates the transgressive, often "kooky" vibe of "Happenings Composition" and its dreams of revolutionary curricular and institutional changes. He laments that "gradually such dreams were abandoned in favor of righting writing; traditional, determinate goals were re-affirmed" (11). In Sirc's opinion, comp turned its back on popular music just when things were getting interesting—with the advent of punk as a genre, counter-culture lifestyle, and cultural theory. So Sirc explains punk's driving energy and ethos and suggests what it could have done for 70s composition, at least on an emotional and ideological level.

A year later, Seth Kahn-Egan tried to tease out some practical applications of Sirc's punk ideology by proposing two courses aimed at channeling the energy of punk's negation into an affirmative pedagogy. In his *CCC* Interchanges contribution "Pedagogy

of the Pissed: Punk Pedagogy in the First-Year Writing Classroom," Kahn-Egan explains, "I'm advocating a classroom where students learn the passion, commitment, and energy that are available from and in writing; where they learn to be critical of themselves and their cultures, and their government—that is, of institutions in general; and, most importantly, where they learn to go beyond finding out what's wrong with the world and begin making it better" (100). This position reflects the affective elements of early pop comp pedagogy as well as the activist impulses of that movement and cultural studies. Kahn-Egan also joins the contemporary movement away from strictly essayistic literacy when he describes how "the format of [the students'] original punks texts will be open—they can write songs, articles, letters, whatever" (103). Finally, Kahn-Egan's article reflects the tension and ambivalence common to much work on pop in comp. For example, in an early section he discusses employing characteristics of old-school and new-school punk, "modified so that we can maintain some civility in our classrooms," but the last line of the article is "Viva la revolution!" (100, 104).

Kahn-Egan's hedging and de-fanging of punk is one of the features Sirc critiques in his response, "Never Mind the Sex Pistols, Where's 2Pac?" where he writes, "I hate to see negation rehabilitated" (105). Instead, he argues for a "composition not meant to take a stand or fix a problem, but simply to reflect on possibility, to chronicle changes, just changing and having a chance to change" (108). Sirc's work is much more about the affective elements of studying popular culture and eschews the transformative agenda of cultural studies, though he realizes that this isn't the popular approach. "I suppose I should work very hard in my class to teach students effective ways to critique, say, the dominant white media. But too often I can't stomach the dominant white media enough

to care to do that project" (106). This statement (and the interchange as a whole) serves as a nice introduction to two issues and two articles that will bring us into the 21st century and reveal important limitations of common cultural-studies approaches to popular culture in composition.

The first is a matter of pop-culture snobbery on the part of academics. In "Justify My Love: Popular Culture and the Academy," Diane Railton notes that, while emerging disciplines like cultural studies, media studies, and gender studies have made it acceptable to study popular culture in academic settings and publications, only certain kinds of popular culture are taken seriously. Scholarship in English and composition has favored pop texts that either a) include or update traditional literary texts and themes, or b) represent transgressive rhetorical acts on the part of marginalized groups. Rap and hip-hop music, for example, have been particularly popular in CCCC presentations for the last several years. Regarding the study of popular music, Railton complains:

> we are constructing a high popular music/mass popular music divide that is essentially the same as the high art/mass culture divided . . . . And we do support it every time we write an article that talks about the artistic and/or political importance of a genre of pop music, or a pop music video, every time we write about some of the audience in a way that implies they are better than the rest because of the musical choices they have made. (par. 4-5)

And so we have Sirc studying punk and then gangsta rap, writing lines such as "Gangsta, like punk, like Malcom X, is all about using a kind of plainspeak grammar and lexicon, charged with as much poetry as one can muster, to fashion a desperate politics of

decency in an indecent world" ("Never Mind the Sex Pistols" 104). I find Sirc's remarks about these resistant rap texts interesting and rather poetic in their own right, but it is problematic that when Sirc discusses the dominant culture that disgusts him, he is talking about the very culture that most of our students identify with and enjoy. To extrapolate from Railton's argument, we don't see anyone writing in *CCC* about the lexicon and politics of "'boy band' pop or the Spice Girls, or for that matter serious academic work on Phil Collins or Celine Dion; work that is highly popular but has no artistic pretensions" (par.6). I would add that when academics do discuss highly popular, totally un-artsy texts, they do so only to deconstruct them and show how misguided our students are for buying into it all.

Any pop pedagogy must decide what kind of texts—whose popular culture—will be studied. Sirc notes that he wouldn't teach punk in his comp class: "I hate to make anyone share my enthusiasms: I'd get creeped out, feeling like Allen Bloom playing students his Mozart records" ("Never Mind the Sex Pistols" 104). Many of the articles I've been discussing mention the need to focus on the students' tastes in popular culture and not what the teacher likes, but this advice isn't always heeded. And when it is, how many instructors cringe at their students' choices or disparage them in the copy room? Compositionists claim to value students' texts and cultures, but the suspicious attitudes of cultural studies and disdainful attitudes so common when Lazere and Aronowitz were writing in the '70s obviously have not disappeared from our publications or our classrooms. This is one aspect of popular culture-based composition that could benefit from a reclamation of popular culture studies, which values a broader range of pop texts and opens a space for student responses beyond deconstruction. Areas covered at

Popular Culture Association conferences range from advertising and automobile culture to Westerns and world's fairs; this inclusiveness allows for a wide variety of student interests and could serve as a remedy to what Cary Nelson critiqued as composition's reduction of cultural studies to textuality. Furthermore, attitudes in popular culture studies allow more for the guilt-free enjoyment of these texts and experiences; students' taste is less likely to be equated with no taste or brainwashed acceptance, so popular culture studies can promote analysis without stirring the resentments students sometimes feel when their favorite texts are critiqued in the cultural-studies-based classroom.

Still, while some instructors complain of students who will buy into anything, perhaps a greater concern for 21st-century cultural-studies composition is students who don't buy into anything. Sirc's blatant cynicism of Kahn-Egan's affirmative agenda and modern media culture at large reflect what Lisa Langstraat calls "miasmic cynicism," which she argues is the "dominant structure of feeling" of our time ("Point" 293). Though Langstraat takes a much different road than Sirc, her concern with cynicism (both in the larger culture and within composition toward cultural-studies pedagogies) also leads her to the affective elements of cultural and pedagogical experience. Langstraat discusses how, while "many cultural studies theorists discuss the general ambience of cynicism in contemporary culture, there remains a befuddling paucity of pedagogical attention to affect—including cynicism—in the composition classroom" ("Point" 303). She also cites Victor Vitanza's contention that "cultural studies writing teachers may actually *engender* cynicism by helping students understand how texts reproduce the worst of late-capitalist values, yet leaving those students without a sense of agency" ("Point" 311). Additionally, we should recognize that most of our students have been reared to

identify with capitalist values and see themselves as potential heroes à la Horatio Alger or at least as responsible, upwardly-mobile citizens. The presentation of the masses as cogs in the machine or victims of the culture industry often associated with cultural studies is likely to reduce students' sense of agency and increase their sense of defensiveness or hostility.

According to Langstraat, lack of agency results from cultural-studies approaches that have privileged "structuralist forms of textual critique that eschewed not only the analysis of the cultural *use* of texts, but also underplayed the possibility of cultural intervention" ("Point" 310). To counter this trend, Langstraat suggests "historicizing and thereby denaturalizing [affective] cultural formations, intervening in those formations through hybrid approaches to activism, and maintaining the possibilities of communal civic engagement" (320). Lansgstraat's promotion of activism and civic engagement, like McComiskey's discussed above, seeks to reclaim the interventionist political agenda of old school cultural studies. This element became watered-down or erased from much composition pedagogy in the early '90s under pressure from forces—both within the field (e.g. Hairston 1992) and outside academia (see Brodkey's treatment of this controversy at the University of Texas)—that attacked the real or imagined promotion of leftist ideology in the classroom. But while overt activism may have gone underground, the underlying critical attitudes continued to inflect pedagogical content and methods, resulting in the frustration and cynicism cited by Vitanza.

Theory (Or Lack Thereof) in Practice

Along with such theoretical and political concerns, composition teachers who wish to integrate popular culture face the practical considerations of how to design and teach successful courses that make the most of popular content. Because there are no comprehensive guides to pop-culture pedagogy, many instructors look to composition textbooks with popular-culture or cultural-studies themes for guidance. Therefore, an important way to examine what is "happening" in writing courses is to look at the textbooks being assigned, and I will close this chapter with an extended review of current composition texts and the pedagogical weaknesses they reveal. In 1976, Richard Ohman took this approach in *English in America*. In doing so he acknowledged, "The procedure is open to an obvious challenge: the books are not identical with courses—they need not be a record either of what happens in classrooms or of a student's experience in learning to write college themes. But advantages overbalance this drawback. The books are accessible; classrooms are not" (143). And so he examined fourteen textbooks based on how they presented their aims, the student's writing situation, invention, argument, organization, audience, style, and usage. His final assessment was that, though the texts represented a wide variety of methods and styles, they all shared certain assumptions that govern the structure of our courses but have little to do with the real lives and works of our students.

In 1995, Kristine Blair returned to Ohman's analysis and the issue of textbooks in "Ideology, Textbook Production, and the Expert Reading of Popular Culture." Blair recalls that one of Ohman's critiques was that most of the books "lack any type of content-oriented pedagogy, focusing on mechanical skills and modes of discourse and the

ever-urgent quest for the 'topic'" (179). Between '76 and '95, however, many textbooks moved to the opposite extreme. According to Blair, the "plethora" of theme- and content-based readers "indicates a focus on the consumption of content that turns the writing process into a process of interpreting texts often for the sake of meaning alone or for the sake of privileging texts as part of an academic or even cultural literacy" (180). Blair uses three examples[13] to represent the problems she sees in popular culture-based textbooks: 1) the privileging of "expert cultural interpretations" over students' readings and productions; 2) the formalist reading of pop-culture texts without consideration of their contexts; and 3) a focus on comprehension at the expense of invention. Blair argues for a pedagogically sound medium—"cultural studies rhetorics, textbooks that provide students with specific writing assignments, writing contexts, and prewriting strategies for students to engage in cultural analysis and to argue for and even create new cultural texts that subvert and disrupt the dominant hegemonies shaped and reflected by mass-mediated discourses" (185).

In order to see if, ten years later, the textbook market has risen to Blair's challenge, I reviewed ten composition textbooks with popular-culture and cultural-studies themes or content published between 2002 and 2005.[14] Three are first editions, but seven

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[13] Blair reviews Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers* 3rd ed., McQuade and Atwan's *Popular Writing in America: The Interaction of Style and Audience* 5th ed., and George and Trimbur's *Reading Culture*.

[14] I selected ten textbooks for review based on descriptions from recent publishers catalogues:
Columbo, Gary, Robert Cullen and Bonnie Lisle, eds. *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2004.
Hirschberg, Stuart and Terry Hirschberg, eds. *Everyday, Everywhere: Global Perspectives on Popular Culture*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002.
LaGuardia, Dolores and Hans P. Guth, eds. *American Voices: Culture and Community*. 5th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003.
(continued)

range from second to sixth editions, proving their viability and frequency of adoption. These textbooks represent a range of approaches to popular culture and cultural studies in composition; they also represent several of the gaps in current pop pedagogy. Regarding writing instruction, most of these texts do indeed privilege consumption over production and expert readings over student readings. As far as production is concerned, the assignment prompts within these texts call for a rather limited range of responses. Regarding thematic content, most texts follow very similar patterns and privilege secondary critical texts over primary popular texts. Thus, while some textbooks still emphasize formalist readings, an equal or greater number focus on cultural, political, and theoretical contexts at the expense of textual elements. At the same time, however, few of these texts offer clear discussions of their theoretical orientation. As a result, instructors would need to supplement these texts with additional textbooks or a significant number of handouts in order to present a unified popular culture-based curriculum that could meet the desired educational outcomes for first-year composition.

To begin from Blair's primary criticism, I compared the balance between content devoted to composition instruction and student production of texts and content devoted to the critical consumption of texts and themed content. The texts under review were

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Maasik, Sonia and Jack Solomon, eds. *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003.

McQuade, Donald and Christine McQuade, eds. *Seeing & Writing 2*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003.

Mims, Joan T. and Elizabeth M. Nollen, eds. *Mirror on America: Short Essays and Images from Popular Culture*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003.

Moser, Joyce and Ann Watters, eds. *Creating America: Reading and Writing Arguments*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Petracca, Michael and Madeline Sorapure, eds. *Common Culture: Reading and Writing About American Popular Culture*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004.

Silverman, Jonathan and Dean Rader, eds. *The World is a Text: Writing, Reading, and Thinking About Culture and Its Contexts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Trimbur, John. *The Call to Write*. 2nd ed. New York, Longman: 2002

overwhelmingly geared toward consumption, which is perhaps to be expected as most of these texts are readers. Only Moser and Watters' *Creating America* and Trimbur's *The Call to Write* balance rhetoric and readings. The fact that most popular culture- and cultural studies-themed textbooks are primarily readers limits their usefulness, especially for less-experienced teachers. Apparently textbook authors and publishers assume that a) the students will buy a separate rhetoric (which is cost-prohibitive for many students); and b) the instructor will have sufficient background in rhetorical and cultural theory to fill in the textbooks' content gaps (which is often not the case in composition programs that rely on GTAs and adjunct faculty). Students and teachers who look to most of these texts for any substantive directions for composition will be lost.

A brief reader like Mims and Nollen's *Mirror on America* is not generally expected to offer an extended discussion of writing, and it doesn't, but instructors expect more coverage of rhetoric and composition in heftier writing textbooks, and too often they are disappointed. We might look for considerable discussion of writing in a book titled *Seeing & Writing 2*, for example, but the McQuades' text offers only two pages on the writing process up front and brief features on compositional strategies at the end of each chapter. Or consider, for example, Maasik and Solomon's *Signs of Life in the USA*, which devotes only nineteen of its 815 pages to direct writing instruction, and eleven of those pages are sample student essays with brief marginal comments. *Signs of Life* does offer some interesting writing prompts at the end of each chapter, including suggestions for journal entries, in-class debates, group work, or other creative activities, which is unique. The majority of the texts I reviewed give some pre-writing and discussion prompts, but deal almost exclusively with the production of traditional personal or

academic essays. Only *The Call to Write* emphasizes instruction and examples for assignments in a variety of genres and includes chapters on web texts and visual design as well as more traditional expository and argumentative forms.

The treatment of research is a particular weakness for many of these textbooks. *Mirror on America* makes no mention of outside research. *Signs of Life* devotes only one paragraph to evaluating sources and three pages to citing sources. The Hirschberg's *Everyday, Everywhere: Global Perspectives on Popular Culture* is somewhat more thorough, with eight pages on working with sources and four pages on citing them with MLA documentation, while Petracca and Sorapure's *Common Culture: Reading and Writing About American Popular Culture* spends a whopping five pages on research and documentation. All of these discussions are quite superficial, telling students little more than that they might want to use outside research, and if so they need to cite their sources. The lack of research focus in most popular-culture and cultural-studies readers reflects a tendency for compositionists to see pop culture as an excellent replacement for writing about literature and traditional personal narratives (the usual content of introductory comp) but not as an acceptable topic for research writing (the usual content of more advanced classes). Of course, the attitude that pop culture isn't appropriate for "serious" argumentative or academic writing might change if more popular culture-based composition textbooks would take writing instruction more seriously.

Along with research, the entire process of production is often under-represented. All of the texts that mention process directly offer pretty traditional (at times almost current-traditional) treatments of student writing. None explore the cultural-studies approaches to process that emerged in the late 90s and some discussions are quite

reductive. For example, *Mirror on America* has some very useful aspects, such as vocabulary guides, ESL glosses, and shorter essays that make it an accessible textbook for composition students at any level. In its overall discussion of writing, however, *Mirror* is perhaps the least progressive, with brief sections on "Hooking the Reader" and "Identifying a Thesis." Many texts still follow a pattern critiqued by Ohman in 1976 of relying on modes and treating the essay as a set form or container to be filled with content. In addition, the majority of writing assignments suggested throughout all of these texts call on students to respond to the professional essays or mimic their expert interpretations, rather than designing and conducting their own textual and cultural analyses, a pattern critiqued by Blair.

Probably the most comprehensive textbook for a popular culture-based writing course that includes research is Silverman and Rader's *The World is a Text*. Following an introduction to the theoretical and methodological foundations of the text, the editors offer a writing introduction that discusses the transition to college writing, the writing process, specific types of writing, and researching popular culture. There is also an appendix: "How Do I Cite This Car?: Guidelines for Citing Popular Culture Texts." While the discussions of each of these writing topics are brief, the editors are frank about the limits of their discussion; "Let us be clear at the outset that we have designed our section on writing as an *introduction* to the writing process. By no means should you consider this a comprehensive guide to constructing papers" (16). For more detailed information, Silverman and Rader point their readers to online writing labs and *World's* sister publication, *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader and Handbook*. Most other texts make no mention of supplementation, though

instructors would need to add a rhetoric, handbook, or extensive handouts to meet their instructional needs, particularly in courses with a research component.

If we assume the need for outside materials to guide instruction in rhetoric and composition strategies and skills, popular culture content and theoretical orientation become deciding factors in determining the best textbook for a pop-based writing course, but here again the textbooks represent holes in much contemporary pop-culture pedagogy. The two most popular organizational strategies for these texts divide content based on genres—film, television, music—or based on issues or topics—race, class, gender—though a few collections blend these approaches. Petracca and Sorapure's *Common Culture,* for example, addresses several genres of pop culture—advertising, television, popular music, cyberculture, sports, and movies—with each chapter moving from general discussions of the genre to essays on specific examples from the genre. *Signs of Life in the USA* employs all of the same genre categories, but adds consumption and American icons to its chapters, which are divided into two sections—"Cultural Productions" and "Cultural Constructions"—which reflect material and lived-experience approaches to pop culture. These common patterns of content and organization provide model analyses and rich topics for discussion. One weakness I see throughout these texts, however, is that they offer plenty of expert writing about pop-culture texts, but few include the popular texts themselves or present commentary from the artists and audiences most involved in their production and consumption. Instructors would, therefore, need to locate primary popular texts to use as subjects for class discussion, analytical practice, and essay topics. This is another challenge, but also an opportunity

for instructors to involve their students in text selection based on their interests and current events.

For several of the textbooks under review, decisions about text selection and organization are clearly influenced by the theoretical or methodological foundations of the collection, though the texts vary significantly in how much theoretical and methodological discussion and apparatus they provide. In this respect, the textbooks mirror the variety of pedagogies based on cultural studies and popular culture studies—some are marked by a clear and theoretically self-conscious statement of methods and objects, but many reflect a more haphazard or shallow appropriation of theoretical concepts and vocabulary. Columbo, Cullen, and Lisle's *Rereading America* marks the shallow end of the theory/method continuum. The contents are common to cultural-studies readers and the introduction discusses the collection's "commitment to resistance," but the editors offer no clear discussion of their guiding theories or methods, and the introduction includes one comment that seems to contradict accepted cultural studies theory: "To begin to appreciate the influence of your own cultural myths, you need new perspectives: you need to stand outside the ideological machinery that makes American culture run to appreciate its power" (8). I think most cultural studies scholars would say that we can try to gain some productive distance and analyze cultural formations, but we can never transcend or step outside of our culture or its ideological forces and hegemonic tendencies. *Rereading America* lacks sufficient writing instruction and is muddy on its theory and method, but it is clearer in its liberal politics and its commitment to challenging the status quo and students' rigid attitudes.

LaGuardia and Guth's *American Voices* likewise lacks a clear theoretical or methodological foundation; its approach to popular culture is certainly "critical"—at one point the editors compare our media dependence to alcoholism (386)—but not necessarily in line with the critical project of cultural studies. The collection does invoke the well-worn cultural-studies topics of race, gender, and class, however, and it could be located in the Trimbur tradition of cultural-studies composition in that the introduction positions students as potential discursive agents and sets a goal of helping students work in their own interest. Unfortunately, the editors never explicitly discuss their philosophy of popular culture or cultural studies, so instructors must read between the lines to connect the texts' contents to specific currents in critical theory and composition studies.

I do not wish to imply that pop-based composition texts must or even should subscribe to cultural studies theory, but some clear guiding theory and method is necessary for a successful composition course. In working toward informed teaching, beginning instructors should at least be able to glean textbook editors' rationale and how the suggested pedagogy is informed by theoretical and political commitments, even if the objective is to eschew overtly theoretical or political readings. In fact, asking students to consider their textbook's content and design—and what assumptions are revealed in their discussions of students, writing, and popular culture—could serve as an interesting introduction to the goals of the course, the instructor's teaching philosophy, academic culture, and relationships between college and capitalism. Often students think of textbooks as offering the "right" answer, but it is useful to recognize that texts can make mistakes and, more importantly, there are many ways to read and write about popular culture.

As I mentioned earlier, for example, Blair presents a class of textbooks that emphasize text-based, formalist approaches to popular culture. The editors of *Mirror on America* state clear goals and make explicit connections to rhetorical theory that often highlight affective elements of textual production and consumption. Moser and Watters' *Creating America: Reading and Writing Arguments* also depends only on rhetorical theory, but the editors provide a more detailed discussion of their rhetorical approach, which is based primarily on Aristotle and influenced by Kenneth Burke, Carl Rogers, and feminist critics. *Seeing and Writing 2*, in contrast, relies almost exclusively on formal analysis anchored in artistic and literary criticism and the bulk of analytical apparatus is devoted to genre criticism and formal textual features. *Common Culture* employs many of the same rhetorical and formal approaches to readings of pop-culture texts found in *Seeing and Writing 2* and *Creating America*, but it defines popular culture as a specific field of study located between high culture and folk culture. *Common Cultue* is also the only text under review to directly reference the popular culture studies movement, citing Marshall Fishwick and Ray B. Browne, and providing an extended bibliography of suggested popular culture studies readings. *Common Culture* features interdisciplinary studies from a variety of critical perspectives, in keeping with the inclusiveness of the popular culture studies tradition.

Three texts include similar content and interdisciplinary perspectives, but lean more toward the theory and methods associated with cultural studies in general and semiotics in particular. Hirschberg and Hirschberg's *Everyday, Everywhere* introduces students to techniques from anthropology, sociology and semiotics for analyzing popular culture. This text also maintains a distinction between high culture and popular culture

and distinguishes between levels of pop culture as well. For example, the introduction discusses the difference between icons and trends or fads. While the textbook introduces specific vocabulary and approaches to studying pop culture, *Everyday, Everywhere* assumes that students already have a familiarity with and expertise in reading popular culture. *Signs of Life in the USA* also presents students as sophisticated consumers of pop culture; however, it argues a need for students to set aside their readings and opinions to engage in semiotic analysis. In a similar vein, The *World is a Text* includes a clear description of its advanced approach to semiotic analysis, and the editors counter student fears about "taking the fun out of" pop culture by noting the "ability to turn our critical abilities on and off; thinking almost becomes a new toy once you realize you can understand the world better and in different ways" (20).

In order to introduce students to these new and different ways of reading the world, *Signs of Life* and *The World is a Text* offer the most detailed discussions of their underlying theory and method, devoting eleven and twenty pages, respectively, to explaining semiotic analysis. *Signs of Life* provides a useful gloss of this school of interpretation with reference to Peirce, Saussure, and Barthes. Along with its overview of semiotics, *TheWorld is a Text* also presents rhetorical theory via Aristotle and I.A. Richards and makes use of formalist literary criticism. It is interesting that while these texts are very clear about their guiding theory and method, they both mention flexibility for instructors regarding how much to deal with these elements. After its detailed introduction, *TheWorld is a Text* adds, "You can use the rest of this book without focusing too much on the theory" (3) and *Signs of Life* assures instructors that their text is designed "to allow instructors to be as semiotic with their students as they wish" (viii).

Such statements seem to support the theory-practice split so common in the scholarship on popular culture and cultural studies in composition.

These theoretical discussions also highlight the disjuncture between critical consumption and textual production mentioned above. In *Signs of Life in the USA*, for example, semiotic analysis precedes the writing process. "The historical surveying and contextualization, the comparative associations and analytic distinctions, and the drawing of interpretive conclusions are what come first in the writing process;" the semiotic heuristic will result in a thesis, which can then be supported by "the evidence that your semiotic thinking produced" (13). While *Signs*' description here does at least introduce the complex textual and cultural relations that concern cultural-studies approaches to popular culture, it does not do justice to the complex and cyclical nature of the writing process. Once again, attention to writing is subsumed by discussions of theory and critical methods, and it appears that Blair is still waiting for a cultural-studies composition text that shows equal concern for production and consumption.

The most common solution to gaps in textbook content has always been to supplement a reader with a rhetoric and/or handbook or perhaps with handouts on specific rhetorical elements or compositional strategies and skills. A more sensible approach, and one that is already taken by a number of experienced instructors, is to start with a solid rhetoric and research guide and supplement that with the most appropriate readings from a variety of sources. (In this respect, Trimbur's *Call to Write* would make a strong foundational text.) Part of the beauty of a pop-culture curriculum is the ubiquity and accessibility of pop-culture texts. Furthermore, this tactic would save the cost and hassle of the frequent textbook adoptions necessitated by the timeliness of current events,

trends, and pop-culture texts and it would allow instructors to include the primary texts so often neglected in writing textbooks. As for theoretical and methodological approaches, articles and book chapters on popular-culture topics from a variety of disciplines can meet that need. Works by scholars in popular culture studies and cultural studies, in particular, can provide content for discussion and model analyses based on relevant theory and appropriate critical methods. Such works also serve as useful examples of different approaches to academic discourse and a growing number of appropriate journals can be accessed through their web pages or library databases. Of course, that is a lot to ask of the overworked instructors and graduate teaching assistants who usually teach first-year composition. Teachers need guidance in order to fill the gaps in popular textbooks and the weaknesses in current practice that these gaps suggest.

To meet this need, I propose an agenda for the production and distribution of a new popular culture-based composition pedagogy that is systematic yet flexible, practical and accessible but informed by cultural and rhetorical theory. The first item on this agenda is the development of a clear critical and instructional paradigm that combines useful elements from cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies' previous appropriations from these fields in order to meet specific educational outcomes. The second task will be to assemble a variety of multimedia and interdisciplinary materials and experiment with lesson plans and assignments that work within this general framework to meet specific goals for specific student populations. It is not enough for individual instructors to produce results in their own classrooms, however; we need to communicate our insights and innovations to our colleagues and, especially, to novice instructors. Therefore, we need to propagate successful pop-based approaches through

research presentations and publications. From this body of knowledge, we can extrapolate an evolving list of best practices and models for teachers training and professional development that should then be incorporated into textbooks and instructor manuals that overcome the weaknesses in current pedagogies and textbooks discussed above.

This is an ambitious agenda, which I can only begin to undertake within the scope of this dissertation. The first two chapters provide necessary background information about the intertwined evolution of cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies and how we have arrived at the current location of popular culture in composition In order to overcome existing weaknesses in pop-based pedagogies, however, compositionists need a clearer understanding of theory and practice from cultural studies and popular cultural studies and how a combination of approaches from these fields can inform our practice. In Chapter Three, therefore, I will survey relevant theoretical, methodological, political, and practical issues that have defined cultural studies and popular culture studies and how these elements should be incorporated into composition instruction. In Chapter Four, I will introduce a guide to comprehensive writing curricula based on informed appropriation form all three fields that fills the holes in current pop-based pedagogies by balancing consumption and production, integrating affect and effect, and situating texts and contexts.

Chapter Three

Navigating Landscapes of Theory, Method, Politics, and Practice in Cultural Studies and Popular Culture Studies

In order to improve current popular culture-based writing pedagogies, compositionists need to examine not only how we have arrived at recent practice, but what alternatives may be possible if we renegotiate our relation to cultural studies and popular culture studies. Chapter One discussed how cultural studies and popular culture studies have evolved and been defined, both within and beyond their own practice. But to get a clearer understanding of both movements, as well as where they overlap and diverge, we must examine their theoretical, methodological, and political commitments as well as their characteristic scholarly and pedagogical practices. Such an examination is no easy task. Not only do scholars offer competing representations of the current state of both fields, but they also offer differing opinions on the direction each movement should take in the future. It is also difficult to discuss theory, method, politics, and practice separately, as these features are always interrelated. The following discussion will, however, provide a sufficient understanding to ground future examinations of popular culture approaches in composition, offer some starting points for compositionists interested in conducting further reading and research in these areas, and suggest how relevant elements from each field can help composition studies work through our own issues of theory and method, politics and pleasure, practice and potential.

Theory

Two weaknesses of current composition practice discussed in Chapter Two are its lack of theoretical specificity and methodological diversity. Too often, compositionists have applied simplified versions of cultural theory with a limited textual emphasis. Such reification is difficult to avoid in classroom practice; we must render theoretical insights on a level comprehensible to college freshmen, and we must emphasize the textual skills required by the core curriculum. This is, however, not a justification for failing to ground our pedagogies in rigorous examinations of the connections between rhetoric and culture. There is no simple resolution to the competing demands for theoretical sophistication and practical clarity, but we can gain some insights from how cultural studies and popular culture studies have negotiated their own complex theoretical and methodological positions.

Perhaps as much as specific theoretical influences, cultural studies and popular culture studies were initially marked by their attitude *toward* theory. Cultural studies originated in the theorization of monumental political, economic, and social changes associated with industrialization and the two World Wars. The seriousness of these early theoretical investigations has resulted in an enduring commitment to theory—not as an abstract intellectual exercise but as a specific political activity. While each cultural studies project is directly shaped by the tools employed as well as by the contexts it addresses and within which it functions, some theoretical influences are consistently identified with cultural studies, particularly Marxist and Gramscian articulations of hegemony and ideology as adopted by Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.

In contrast, early popular culture studies could be seen as atheoretical or anti-theoretical. As mentioned earlier, the popular culture association formed as a reaction against what it saw as the elitist "high theory" dominating English and American studies at the time. Ray B. Browne was an outspoken critic of elite academic culture and its tendency to rely on esoteric theoretical jargon. He was also critical of the Frankfurt School, which "looked down on the 'Masses'" and he was suspicious of "American Marxists, Neo-Marxists, and pseudo-Marxists" who "have likewise looked upon popular culture as being manipulated by an all-powerful capitalism which has nothing but contempt for the desires and accomplishments of the so-called masses" (Hoppenstand 59). Browne preferred more democratic and optimistic readings of popular culture.

It is hardly surprising that the cultural criticism written in the shadows of Nazism, fascism, and the practical failures of socialism would be highly critical of the ideological functions of media and culture. Thus, in "The Culture Industry," Horkheimer and Adorno describe a diabolical, organized force that occupies man from the time he clocks out until he clocks back in again with deceptive representations of choice, individuality, and success that belie the absolute control of dominant ideologies. Under this system, "The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him" (74) and Horkheimer and Adorno present those men—and, more often, women— most willing to enjoy these offerings as slow-witted. Even more insidious, however, is the potential for fascists to spread their linguistic violence via the loudspeakers of mass media. Similarly, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" argues Communism's need to politicize art in response to fascism's aestheticization of politics. Benjamin writes, "Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right [to

change property relations], but instead the chance to express themselves" (63). Thus pop culture replaces religion as the opiate of the masses, numbing citizens to conditions in the real world and denying them the agency to change those conditions.

It was this highly-pessimistic treatment of the overly-determined nature of cultural relations that drew fire from Browne and his colleagues in popular culture studies. However, not all of the early influences of cultural studies presented the critique of culture in wholly negative terms. As Gramsci wrote of literary theory:

> A consistently negative criticism, based on slashing evaluations and demonstrations of 'non-poetry' rather than of 'poetry', would become tedious and revolting . . . It seems clear that criticism must always have a positive function, in the sense that it must point out the positive value in the work being studied. If this aspect cannot be artistic, perhaps it can be cultural . . . (113)

Similarly, critiques of culture that focus only on the negative aspects lead to alienation and cynicism, as suggested by Vitanza, Langstraat, and Sirc's comments discussed in Chapter Two. Composition instructors often have to clarify the distinction between academic critique and criticism as an automatically negative evaluation for our students; it serves us well to keep that distinction in mind in our own critiques of pop culture.

Some cultural studies theorists have likewise challenged the overwhelming negativity often associated with the movement. In his overview of Dick Hebdige's influential work, Vincent Leitch writes, "What Hebdige deplores is any doctrinaire negativity incapable of appreciating and assessing new political formations engendered through heterogeneous aesthetic forms and disseminated through mainstream circuits"

(*Cultural* 158). Of course, Leitch notes that "Accentuating the positive entails attenuating the negative" and he expresses a concern that "Hebdige's populism comes to embody affirmation without negativity at considerable cost, namely the virtual disappearance of life and death struggles, intractable separatisms, and violent exclusionary hierarchies" (159). The same charges were brought against the populism of early popular culture studies, which has been characterized as an "uncritical celebration" of popular culture that, in rejecting high theory, rejected any serious consideration of the negative features of the culture industry. As popular culture studies has evolved, however, its scholars have increasingly accepted and applied a variety of critical theories, many of which overlap with the theoretical influences of cultural studies.

It is ironic, for example, that while Browne and several of his contemporaries initially rejected Marxism, the 1988 collection *Symbiosis: Popular Culture and Other Fields*, which Browne co-edited, contains Michael Real's essay "Marxism and Popular Culture: The Cutting Edge in Cultural Criticism." It is also interesting that Real discusses Douglas Kellner's readings of dominant, subordinate, and oppositional codes in popular television programs as an example of structural Marxist popular culture studies. Given his strong criticism of the PCA, Kellner might not appreciate the "popular culture studies" moniker, but Real makes no distinction between the two traditions when discussing cultural studies, political economy, structuralist textual analysis, and the emerging agenda of Marxism and popular culture. The *Symbiosis* collection also contains articles on popular culture and systems theory and post-structuralism. Another edited collection, *Eye on the Future: Popular Culture Scholarship in the 21st Century* contains articles informed by Marxism, semiotics, feminism, and rhetorical theory. As

these essays suggest, contemporary popular culture studies and cultural studies operate within a number of related theoretical frameworks, most notably Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism. A full articulation of these complicated theoretical constructions and relationships is not possible within the scope of this study, but I would like to emphasize a few of the theoretical relationships that inform the methodologies and philosophies of cultural studies and popular culture studies.

In beginning from the common thread of Marxism, I want to clarify that the Marxist theory that informs much of the work on popular culture should not be equated with traditional Marxism in the strict sense, as both cultural studies and popular culture studies reject the economic reductionism and determinism of classical Marxist thought (thus they often use the lower case to distinguish the leftist body of theory from Marx and his specific theories). The Birmingham Centre's association with Marxism is complicated. Grossberg locates the emergence of cultural studies "as a disciplinary formation and intellectual position in the confrontation (initially it was often silent) between this humanist Marxism (which Hall calls 'culturalism') and the antihumanism of Althusser's structural Marxism" (*Bringing* 201). Grossberg summarizes the resulting position:

> The Centre sought to study the *relative* autonomy of culture within historically specific social formations as an alternative to the structuralist tendency to give cultural practices an absolute autonomy and to ground them in universal textual and psychoanalytical processes. If, for structuralists, subjectivity is constitutive of ideology, cultural studies argued that ideology constitutes subjects. Rather than looking at how

> subjects are positioned within the discursive production of meaning, cultural studies raised the question of social identity as part of the larger social struggle over meanings. (*Bringing* 217-18)

The negotiation of culturalist and structuralist approaches to culture has important implications for cultural studies methodology beyond this theoretical mediation, which I will discuss below.

At the most basic level, Storey explains, cultural studies has taken two key assumptions from Marxism. The first is that we must consider texts and practices within the specific temporal, material, and social contexts of their production, distribution, and consumption. The second is "the recognition that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along, for example, ethnic, gender, generational and class lines" (3). Culture is ideological because it "is one of the principal sites where this division is established and contested," and according to Storey, "Ideology is without a doubt the central concept in cultural studies" (4). But the Birmingham Centre "argued against reflectionist and reductionist notions of ideology in favor of an effort to understand it as the construction of a consensual worldview: cultural power as consent, cultural struggle as the opposition of competing, sociologically locatable structures of meaning" (Grossberg, *Bringing* 213). The danger is that this line of Marxist interpretation (especially in conjunction with post-structuralism) can and often does lead to a nihilistic representation of communicative interaction that subverts the activist goals of cultural studies. If subjectivities are constituted by the texts they consume, and the dominant has disproportionate control over the production of these texts, the masses are left to struggle (or not) in discursive spaces where identification with said texts equals

false consciousness and rejection of same equals little more than surface rebellion which is then appropriated by the mainstream as another fashion trend or lifestyle choice.

Popular culture studies has drawn similar assumptions from Marxism, but popular culture studies scholarship has been inflected with a more positive characterization of the struggle over meaning within popular discursive fields. Gary Hoppenstand argues that popular culture studies rejects the largely negative attitude toward the "masses" and their mass culture reflected in the Marxist cultural-studies tradition (59). Instead of viewing popular culture primarily as a tool for capitalist hegemony, popular culture scholars see it as a potential tool for establishing more equitable democracies. While popular culture studies has been criticized for failing to identify the negative hegemonic potential of pop culture, many scholars simultaneously recognize its destructive tendencies as well as its constructive potential. In his recent work on popular culture and technology, Joseph W. Slade offers this tempered characterization of the ideological terrain of culture:

> Media, for instance, do function as instruments of control, in the sense of agents of order and stability—rather than, or not simply as, instruments of domination and oppression—in an arena increasingly public and increasingly diverse, as different groups advance their concerns toward the center of the larger arena. . . . in an information age technology can empower the individual as much as it alienates masses; that it can encourage sharing as much as it divides; that it redistributes control as much as it enclusters privilege; that it alters the conception of property by converting everything—artifact as well as idea, "high culture" or "low"—into commodities to be consumed. (165)

Within cultural studies, this view might seem somewhat utopian. John Storey and Angela McRobbie have argued that "the undermining of the Marxist paradigm by events in Eastern Europe and the attacks of postmodern critics" have caused two trends of political repositioning among culture critics. One is "a return to economic reductive forms of analysis," that do not adequately account for the role of ideology in production and consumption, and the other is "an uncritical celebration of consumerism, in which consumption is understood too exclusively in terms of pleasure and meaning-making" (Storey 5). It could be argued that Slade is following the latter trend were it not for the fact that popular culture studies has paid particular attention to consumption from its inception. To characterize popular culture studies' approach as an uncritical celebration is an exaggeration, but the predominant attitude toward consumption and consumers has been more positive than negative. It has been said that Ray B. Browne "cast his lot with the people" and the field of popular culture studies has generally followed suit (Nachbar 204). This populism is a defining feature of the political commitments of popular culture studies as well as its theoretical orientation.

In addition to a concern with the consumption or reception of popular texts, popular culture scholarship has been primarily concerned with analysis of the popular culture texts themselves. Along with traditional literary methods of analysis, these textual studies have been heavily influenced by structuralism. Though structuralism began with the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, the elements of structuralism that have most impacted popular culture studies (as well as cultural studies and literary criticism) were introduced via Claude Levi-Strauss's structural linguistics. In "The Structural Study of Myth," Levi-Strauss analyzes myths to isolate the *mythemes*, or key

components, of the story, and then seeks the relation of the mytheme as a general representative and as a specific embodiment of a paradigmatic structure (Richter 853). The continuing influence of this brand of structuralism is illustrated by Donald E. Palumbo's recent *Journal of Popular Culture (JPC)* article "The Monomyth in Alfred Bester's *The Stars of My Destination*," which offers an analysis of monomythic elements such as the archetypal hero, the quest narrative, and death and rebirth pattern in a popular science fiction novel. A key feature of Levi-Strauss's structuralism is that "The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations, and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce meaning" (872). Thus all versions of a myth become significant, negating the quest for the "authentic" or "original" myth.

This structural insight opens new avenues for the study of non-canonical, popular instances of mythic narratives. In his introduction to structuralism in *The Critical Tradition*, David H. Richter describes how Umberto Eco's structuralist essay "The Myth of Superman" contains an "immense range of reference, from revered texts like *Oedipus Rex* and *Finnegans Wake* to ephemera like Superman comics, Nero Wolfe detective stories, and the 'Doctor Kildare' television series" (855). Richter's reference to Superman comics as "ephemera" and his later comment that Todorov's analysis of Henry James' work "takes up a more respectable subject than Superman comics," however, illustrates that literary studies did not always embrace the pop-culture implications of structuralist theory that informed cultural studies and popular culture studies.

Roman Jakobson's model of communication with six factors or functions—sender, contact, receiver, message, context, and code—has also been highly influential

for pop-culture criticism. Focusing on the encoder-code-decoder elements of communication, Stuart Hall's marxist structuralism distinguishes between dominant, subordinate, and oppositional codes and argues that "the meaning of a cultural experience does not reside in a self-evident message sent from A to B but in the negotiation of meaning that includes producer-reader (parallel tasks), message text, and cultural environment" (Real 152). This approach can be found in many cultural studies texts, including Douglas Kellner's extensive work on popular television and movies. The emphasis on the negotiation of meaning is important for an effective application of this theory to composition studies, and one complaint against recent practice discussed in Chapter Two has been its reduction of Hall's encoder-code-decoder system to a set of discrete elements in a simplified rhetorical situation.[15] But Hall's analysis of communication represents the complex interaction of "culturalist" and "structuralist" approaches —a relation that is the basis of contemporary cultural studies and popular culture studies and should inform pop-culture composition. Because "structuralist" approaches actually include the theoretical constructs and methods of structuralism and poststructuralism, I will briefly discuss the role of poststructuralism in cultural studies and popular culture studies before discussing the conjunction of the two.

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15 Grossberg also critiques the communicational cultural studies practiced in the U.S. for its "reification" of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model. The result, according to Grossberg, is the presentation of one specific, contextually-defined model as the correct model or method for cultural studies. In order for this method to fit a wide variety of communicative contexts, "the sophistication of Hall's model was (and is) ignored so that it becomes little more than a recycling of the old, theoretically discredited, linear model of communication–sender-message-receiver–but the terms are changed (to hide the guilty): production-text-consumption" (*Bringing* 283). Additionally, Grossberg argues that Richard Johnson's 1986 *Social Text* article "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" which served as American academia's major introduction to cultural studies, presents a model very similar to that of communicational cultural studies (*Bringing* 286). The influence of this article within academia is likely why some scholars and educators have taken a reductive approach to cultural studies.

Like structuralism, post-structuralism is rooted in the linguistics of Saussure, but it focuses on the arbitrary and "slippery" relationship between the signifier and the signified and undermines the unifying humanistic agenda of structuralism (Richter 945). Post-structuralism further continued structuralism's leveling of texts and devoted significant critical attention to the popular. Derridean deconstruction questions all polar binaries, thereby rendering the high-low distinction of cultural critique obsolete, and in his influential *Mythologies*, Barthes analyzes a variety of popular texts including wrestling matches and advertisements. David R. Shumaway's discussion of "Post-Structuralism and Popular Culture" notes that popular culture studies has been influenced particularly by Barthes's analysis of "how popular narratives often pose a genuine social or political problem, but then depoliticize it by telling a story in which another, apolitical problem is solved. In other words, Barthes's work assumes that the conventions of popular forms are more significant than the ideas which a particular work might express" (163).

Timothy J. Brown's recent "Deconstructing the Dialectical Tensions in *The Horse Whisperer*: How Myths Represent Competing Cultural Values," is a clear example of the continuing popularity of post-structuralist approaches in popular culture studies. Noting that myths function to confirm, intensify, and reinforce attitudes, beliefs, and values, Brown critiques our national myths of the western frontier as idealized representations that ignore competing values such as those of the Native Americans. In analyzing the (often oppressive) cultural values embodied in such texts, Brown moves beyond the text-based, structural analysis of westerns popularized by Cawelti. In doing so, Brown

illustrates popular cultural studies' movement toward the theoretical frameworks employed in much cultural studies scholarship.

In addition to deconstruction, post-structuralism has probably most influenced cultural studies through the work of Louis Althusser, who "combined Marxism with the post-structural psychoanalysis of Lacan." The result was a realization "that the subject, the very consciousness that earlier Marxists thought had promised to enlighten, is itself constituted by language and hence ideology. . . . Since ideology is unconscious, we can only get at it via its 'symptoms' in cultural artifacts or texts by looking for . . . what in a particular ideological system is repressed" (Shumway 163). After this shift, ideology "was no longer referred directly to a coherent worldview but rather to the production of social identity and experience around real sociological differences" (Grossberg, *Bringing* 218). Here again we are at the important intersection of culturalist and structuralist approaches to cultural studies.

I adopt this particular use of the terms "culturalist" and "structuralist" from Vincent Leitch, who explains these predominant approaches to cultural theory:

> The "culturalist" mode, derived from sociology, anthropology, and social history, and influenced by the home-grown work of Hoggart, Thompson, and Williams, regards a culture as a whole way of life and struggle accessible through detailed concrete (empirical) descriptions that capture the unities of commonplace cultural forms and material experience. The "structuralist" mode, indebted to French linguistics, literary criticism, and semiotic theory, and especially attentive to texts by Althusser, Barthes, and Foucault, conceives of cultural forms as (semi)autonomous

> "discourses" susceptible to rhetorical and semiological analyses of cognitive constitutions and ideological effects. (*Cultural* 145)

The culturalist mode of cultural studies is also grounded in the work of Marx, Horkheimer, and Adorno. While culturalist inquiry necessitates interdisciplinary theory and method and emphasizes larger contexts, structuralist approaches have been more concerned with textual analysis and invoke the methods of linguistics and literary criticism.

The complexity of the relation is illustrated by the fact that Levi-Strauss's influential linguistic structuralism grew out of his anthropological field work. Structuralism and post-structuralism rely on close-reading of texts, but in turn point beyond texts to the cultural structures and values that inform them. The resulting critical theory has thus been marked by an alternating textual and contextual emphasis. According to Leitch, "What distinguishes CCCS [Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies] research in latter years is an attempt to employ both modes of inquiry, using Gramscian theory as a bridge" (*Cultural* 145). Leitch refers to the resultant "methodological tactic that construes objects and phenomena always in relation to complex temporal and spatial contiguities and proximities" as the "protocol of entanglement" (146). In Grossberg's evolutionary history of cultural studies, the result of culturalist and structuralist negotiations within the field is described as a "theoretical shift into a 'conjuncturalist' cultural studies," which "argues that while there are no necessary correspondences (relations), there are always real (effective) correspondences" (*Bringing* 220-221). This conjuncturalism is the defining theory of contemporary cultural

studies and greatly informs the conjunctural approach to composition studies I will promote in Chapter Four.

There are also traces of the conjunctural shift in popular culture studies. While popular culture scholars have generally emphasized the text or audience reception, there has been increasing attention to the entire process, context, or milieu of popular culture. Slade points to this progression in his discussion of popular culture and technology. "In the future, being able to read the structures of culture from aggregates of data may be more important than content analysis of individual messages. In fact, says Joshua Meyrowitz, "analyzing media messages as a way of understanding technology is like trying to understand the early Industrial Revolution by focusing on the colors of the textiles that the then-novel power looms turned out" (qtd. in Slade 167). Such conjunctural approaches recognize the simultaneous fragmentation and interdependence of popular texts and point toward the literacies and analytical skills required by modern—and postmodern—culture. Individual media messages that seem shallow or fragmented can actually invoke webs of intertextuality that invite more complicated hermeneutic acts than the messages themselves would suggest.

Critics claim that public literacy is declining, but it may be that the public is deploying different, but perhaps equally useful, literacies based on breadth rather than depth in deciphering their cultural contexts. The contingent relation of texts and contexts shapes and is shaped by what Grossberg defines as a "'nomadic subjectivity' existing only within the movement of and between apparatuses [that] rejects both the existential subject who has a single unified identity and the deconstructed, permanently fragmented subject" (*Bringing* 230). This conjunctural understanding of textuality and subjectivity is

a key feature of postmodernism's influence on cultural criticism. The radical undermining of the concept of scholarly objectivity and the recognition of the interestedness of all academic projects have influenced the conjuncturalism of cultural studies and validated the tendency in popular culture studies for researchers to be emotionally as well as intellectually connected to the objects of their study.

Stephen Tatum outlines this development within popular culture studies, noting that one problem for the popular culture critic is the lack of "temporal or spatial distance" between the observer and the observed. Tatum argues, however, that cultural critics have traditionally presented themselves as working "from this separate, uncontaminated high moral ground" that allows them to understand how texts and contexts work while avoiding "the lure of commodification" themselves (61). Tatum's suggestions for the future of popular culture studies include "the need to jettison the pose of a neutral, unbiased, viewing critic whose transcendent gaze works to distance seeing subject from seen object in sensual, intellectual, and spiritual ways" and "the further need to build into our methodological pursuits a commitment to seeing popular culture from what Clifford Geertz would call the 'native's' point of view" (65).

The reference to Geertz is significant as his anthropological writings are identified with the rhetorical turn in the social sciences and the post-Kuhnian critique of scientific objectivity. This has made Geertz' work an accessible foothold for humanities scholars working in the opposite direction by employing social science approaches to improve their understanding of the circulation of texts, enrich the terrain of their studies, and counter Reagan-era critiques about the radical relativity or formalist irrelevance of textual studies. Cultural studies and popular culture studies have thus employed methods from a

number of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences to investigate the intersections of language, art, and culture.

Method

The methodological evolution of cultural studies and popular culture studies has been shaped by the negotiation of culturalist and structuralist modes of cultural critique discussed above and has challenged the limitations of traditional English studies by expanding the canon of texts to be studied, the methods that should be brought to bear on these texts, and our understanding of textuality itself. Just as cultural studies and popular culture studies have come to share a number of theoretical foundations despite their early antagonisms, both movements have come to share certain methodological tendencies in their efforts to negotiate the complexities of cultural texts and contexts. Most significantly, both fields have promoted a methodological eclecticism that can serve as a corrective for composition studies' overwhelming emphasis on text-based approaches to popular culture.

Cultural studies' theory of conjuncturalism requires a diversity of techniques for examining the many factors at play in any cultural situation. Grossberg explains that the "radical contextualism" of conjuncturalism "shapes the methodological practice of cultural studies as articulation" (*Bringing* 258). This method of articulation is neither essentialist nor anti-essentialist because it operates from the understanding that conditions and relations are real and exist as they are, but they did/do not necessarily have to be as they are. The goal of cultural criticism, then, is to explain how specific relations are created and transformed and trace their effects. Because these are complex processes

occurring within specific contextual frames, the larger method of articulation subsumes a number of more specific, interdisciplinary methods of inquiry. Norma Schulman explains that "cultural studies prides itself on having no doctrine per se and no 'house approved' methodology. It is rather self-consciously conceived of as being highly contextual—a variable, flexible, critical mode of analysis." But cultural studies has used some methods rather consistently, including "ethnographic fieldwork, interviewing, textual and discourse analysis, and traditional historical methods." Schulman elaborates that cultural studies initially used "experiential, even autobiographical" methods but became "more theoretically sophisticated, abstract, and methodologically diverse as the 1970s unfolded, under the leadership of Stuart Hall, who was one of the first to ensure structuralist and semiotic approaches . . . gained currency." Because the cultural studies movement began before the advent of structuralism and post-structuralism, the literary-critical methods these theories entail were integrated into the social-sciences methodology informed by early culturalist approaches.

Popular culture studies has been marked by a similar suspicion of orthodoxy and diversity of methods, but followed an opposite trajectory toward the full integration of structuralist and culturalist methods. According to Marhsall Fishwick, "popular culture specialists can't agree on any method—or indeed, if they even need and want one" (5).[16]

[16] While Fishwick and Browne have always supported a "humanistic approach" to popular culture studies that accepts "any and all methods, as long as they contribute to our understanding of culture" (Hoppenstand 60), not all popular culture scholars are as comfortable with such an "anything goes" approach to theory and method in popular culture studies. Harold E. Hind, Jr. claims that the inclusiveness of early popular culture definitions like Browne's "has been taken so literally that popular culture's umbrella now shelters an extremely disparate group of subjects and borrowed methodologies. Indeed, the development of a general theory or set of theories of popular culture and a methodology or methodological approach unique to it may have become impossible without a sharper focus" ("Popularity: Sine Qua Non" 207). Hinds argues for new efforts at theory building based on his narrower definition of popular culture mentioned (continued)

He does, however, note a tendency to borrow methods from historians, anthropologists, and folklorists (22). The web page of the Department of Popular Culture at Bowling Green State University offers the following explanation of how social science and humanities methodologies work together in popular culture studies:

> Social science methodologies enable the popular culture scholar to root an expressive form in its social context and to uncover the aesthetic system upon which it is judged. Humanities approaches provide models for the appreciation of aesthetic forms and enable the scholar to apply theories of genre and make comparative analytical statements. As social science and humanities methodologies are combined in the study of artistic forms of expression that are broadly based in society, scholars can begin to provide an understanding of the social and cultural significance of these artistic forms, and begin to determine the aesthetic, social, commercial, and technological considerations that underlie their creation, distribution, and reception. (”Popular Culture: A Background”)

The latter part of this description echoes descriptions of cultural studies methodology, particularly in the language that references the creation/distribution/reception economic model of communication and the recognition of myriad external forces that shape texts and are thus appropriate avenues for study.

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above, and new methods including extensive empirical research to determine the popularity of given texts and the factors that make them popular (“Popularity: How”). Most popular culture scholars, however, still seem to embrace the theoretical and methodological pluralism that has thus far marked the field.

Many popular culture scholars also blend disciplinary methods and theories within their individual works. For example, Stephen Tatum discusses how John G. Cawelti combines sociological functionalist methods with audience identification and response theories from psychology in his approach to studying formulaic stories: "Cawelti situates the use value of popular formulaic stories both in the interior realm of an individual's cathartic release from tension, ambiguity, and conflict, and in the exterior, more public and social realm, to the extent that such texts provide formal and thematic mechanisms for consumers to adjust or accommodate themselves to the accumulating changes in their everyday lives" (68). Supporting this tendency to combine methods or eschew methodological definition, Fishwick asks, "Is not the real meaning of culture outside of any precise method, tied into the understanding of the erratic and irrational world that people inhabit and relish?" (qtd. in Walden 100). Indeed, too much concern about method can have a reductive effect on the field by narrowing the scope of inquiry and validating only the critical perspectives of existing methodologies.

Fishwick argues that popular culture studies has limited itself by seeking to work within respected humanities methodologies that privilege "the abstract over the earthy," and explain culture "from the top down rather than the bottom up" (29). Tatum likewise argues that popular culture studies should align itself "with developments in cultural anthropology and, perhaps, even sociology . . . to disclose how popular texts and practices possess complexities which belie their status merely as formulaic reproductions of the dominant ideology." He also suggests employing methods such as ethnography in order to uncover "the varied and often contradictory ways in which people make sense of the everyday" (64). Gretchen M. Herrmann's "Haggling Spoken Here: Gender, Class,

and Style in US Garage Sale Bargaining" offers an interesting example of an anthropological investigation of a popular culture practice. Though studies based on social science methods applied to events and experiences are less common than those based on literary methods applied to more static texts, proponents of interdisciplinary studies of popular culture recognize that a variety of methods are valuable and can be most productive when used in conjunction.

The area of film studies provides some useful illustrations of how cultural studies and popular culture studies employ interdisciplinary theories and methods in analyses of media texts. Of course, the approaches to film in both fields have changed considerably over the decades in response to external theoretical and cultural practice, and at any time multiple approaches have existed side by side. For example, cultural studies witnessed an early shift from text-based studies to more ethnographic methods, but Storey notes that film work in cultural studies throughout the 70s was highly influenced by both structuralism and post-structuralism. He offers Will Wright's 1975 *Sixguns and Society* as an example of the structuralist methodology. Wright draws on Saussure and Levi-Strauss in analyzing Westerns as myth, identifying three stages of Western, all of which employ the same structuring oppositions, but stage-specific narrative functions. What marks Wright's approach as cultural studies and not pure structuralism is that it offers what Storey describes as a "rather reductive correspondence theory" in which "he claims that each type of Western 'corresponds' to a different moment in the recent economic development of the USA" and "articulates its own mythic version of how to achieve the *American Dream*"(57-59).

In Storey's estimation, however, cultural studies film criticism came into its own with the move away from these text-based approaches and back toward a more ethnographic methodology that focused on a Gramscian "understanding of the relationship between spectators and film text as one of 'negotiation'" (68). This approach is illustrated by Jackie Stacey's 1994 *Star Gazing: Hollywood and Female Spectatorship*, which uses research on female moviegoers to outline three discourses of audience experience—'escapism,' 'identification,' and 'consumerism' (68-69). Stacey's work highlights "the importance of maintaining a theoretical understanding of the space between dominant discourses of consumption and female spectators' consumer practices in different locations" (qtd. in Storey 73). Stacey explains that the cultural studies approach is characterized by its focus on audience readings, ethnographic methods, and a view of meaning as consumption-led. She contrasts these features with traditional film criticism's focus on spectatorship positioning, textual readings, and view of meaning as production-led. Stacey's cultural studies approach features an active, conscious viewer and allows for more optimistic readings of media texts and contexts, whereas the traditional methods focused on media manipulation and presented a passive, unconscious viewer, resulting in more pessimistic readings (Storey 69). While American cultural studies has not maintained a consistently positive view of the role of audience in meaning-making, the location of audience in the cycle of production has been an ongoing critical concern.

Popular culture studies approaches to film have also consistently emphasized audience analysis and reader-response, though they have generally been more text-centered and less ideologically-inflected than those of cultural studies. For example,

Cawelti's influential 1971 publication *The Six-Gun Mystique* covers similar content to Wright's *Sixguns and Society*. Stephen Tatum describes Cawelti's standard approach, which "begins by introducing key features of a particular formulaic story and by documenting the trajectory of its popularity in the dominant culture. It then moves to sketching in how these features' particular contours relate to particular social experiences and audience needs, as well as to inherited generic conventions" (71). Cawelti's work, and popular culture studies in general, is marked by a greater emphasis on textual relations than contextual relations, even when both fall within the scope of the investigation.

In 1985, Cawelti wrote of the benefits and limitations of genre criticism, which he identified as one of the key concepts of popular culture studies (along with aesthetics). In addition to his discussion of the merits of genre for heuristic, classification, and comparison purposes, Cawelti admits, "the genre approach does not particularly encourage complex analyses of the portrayal of social ideas and values in individual works. In other words, what we usually describe as "thematic" or "ideological" aspects of art are not central to genre criticism" ("With Benefit" 373). Cawelti mentions several approaches from literary and rhetorical criticism that might extend the practice of popular culture studies, but notes that these are "neither contradictory to nor a replacement for generic analysis" (373).

In his most recent writing on the subject, Cawelti devotes somewhat more attention to larger contexts and what he calls "the analysis of the cultural dialectics of genres or formulas," but he notes that these studies require a depth and breadth of research that is "daunting" (*Mystery* 137). Cawelti suggests that a more practical

alternative is to hope for a cumulative knowledge based on a number of narrower treatments. This cumulative approach bears some similarity to the goal of conjunctural research in cultural studies. However, Cawelti claims that "For the sake of clarity we must often treat the analysis of formulas as structures isolated from the cultural background that creates them" (*Mystery* 135), while cultural studies would deny either the possibility or the relevance of such detached analyses. Beyond this distinction, Cawelti's introduction of cultural dialectics serves as an example of how popular culture studies has recently followed a trajectory similar to cultural studies from text-based analysis to readings that focus on audience, experience, and cultural context.

Grossberg notes that social science methods that emphasize the relations between individuals and their social contexts illuminate a dialectic of intersubjectivity—the constitutive web of people and institutions that always determine communicative acts. With popular culture studies' greater emphasis on texts, this web is enacted more as a dialectic of intertextuality. In both instances, meaning-making occurs as our consciousness shuttles between individual, context-specific communicative acts and the broader available field of texts/experiences/forces that are invoked by the individual text. To understand the rich textual, rhetorical, and cultural operations involved in this meaning-making process, cultural studies and popular culture studies have employed many of the same methods from literary criticism and social sciences research, but they have used these intellectual tools to shape their critical projects toward different political and practical ends.

Politics

Because there is so much theoretical and methodological common ground between cultural studies and popular culture studies, it is easy to see why those outside of these movements have confused the two. But beyond the more subtle distinctions discussed so far, the key difference that distinguishes one movement from the other, and often provokes strong differences of opinion, is politics. Both cultural studies and popular culture studies are concerned with context and with relations of production, distribution, and reception, but while popular culture studies primarily describes these contexts and relations and how people experience them, cultural studies is politically committed to interventions that improve material and ideological conditions. Also at issue in the relation between people and the cultural contexts they inhabit is the function of affective engagement and the political construction of pleasure as liberation or manipulation.

Cultural studies has been defined as a political project from its inception, but there is some debate about the extent to which cultural studies calls for direct political participation. On one hand, Grossberg argues that cultural studies is interventionist "*not* in the sense that it intends to leave the realm of intellection and carry its practice to the streets," but "in the sense that it attempts to use the best intellectual resources available to gain a better understanding of the relations of power . . . in a particular context, believing that such knowledge will better enable people to change the context and hence the relations of power" (*Bringing* 253). Kellner's concept of intervention discussed below, however, and the activist agenda of many cultural studies projects, supports more direct action. In addition, some concepts associated with cultural studies in American academia, such as the radical pedagogy promoted by Henry Giroux and Ira Shor or

Cornel West's appropriation of a Gramscian model of the organic intellectual, give American cultural theory an active interventionist flavor. Even so, there is often some distance between the activist ideal and practical reality.

In "Whatever Happened to Cultural Studies?" Robert W. McChesney critiques contemporary American cultural studies for turning away from the overtly political mission of Raymond Williams and the founders of the field—a mission he characterizes as "anticapitalist, antimarket, pro-dispossessed, pro-democratic, and therefore pro-socialist, broadly construed" (76). McChesney's description suggests that cultural studies can only fulfill its true goals through progressive politics. Grossberg contends that cultural studies' "project is always political, always partisan, but its politics are always contextually defined" (*Bringing* 253). In this sense, there is no necessary connection between cultural studies and leftist or liberal politics. Even though the political affinity of the cultural critic is theoretically determined by specific contexts and contests, the political leanings of the American cultural movement have been overwhelmingly leftist or liberal. McChesney's critique, then, is based more on the character of contemporary cultural studies as an intellectual, academic movement rather than a political, activist movement.

McChesney claims that the postmodern or poststructural turn in cultural studies has had "disastrous implications for its politics" because the turn has resulted in the current emphasis on identity and representation at the expense of community and the acceptance of the victory of market capitalism at the expense of working toward a more equitable, if distant, future (78-91). On the other hand, Leitch explains that "Because post-structuralists sketch no political program, they are taken as advocates of resignation

and fatalism. But the charge does not follow. The politics indirectly suggested by post-structuralists calls for micro-political resistance and localized initiatives, not for quietism and retreat" (*Cultural* 134). Whether the activist agenda is directed toward a revolutionary mass movement or more limited collective action, however, cultural studies' political project is challenged by its location within universities that value individual achievement and vocational success. Consider, for example, that collaborative research and action was the norm in early Centre projects, but such collaboration is hardly fostered in the tenure and promotion economy of American higher education. It also seems hypocritical to denounce capitalism from the podiums in classes designed to help students succeed within that same system, one in which we benefit from the uneven distribution of economic, intellectual, and cultural capital. On the other hand, identity politics have become standardized into inoffensive multicultural readers that fit well within the university's goal of "well-rounded citizens."

To counter this depoliticizing trend, Douglas Kellner promotes a "critical, multicultural, and multiperspectival conception of cultural studies . . . which presents culture, society, and politics as terrains of contestation between various groups and class blocs" (*Media Culture* 101). Kellner argues that the goal of cultural studies analysis is to identify "which contests are going on, between which groups, and which positions, with the cultural analyst intervening on what is perceived as the more progressive side" (101). One potential weakness in this activist agenda is that it seems to assume that an objective application of the proper methodology will lead to critical consciousness and truth. Such an assumption ignores the intellectual's own reflexive position within cultural contexts and contests, a position implied in Kellner's suggestion that critics intervene on the side

"perceived" as most progressive. The positive consequence of this focus on critical perception, however, is that it allows scholars to work through the sometimes paralyzing cynicism and relativism of postmodern criticism and engage in direct political action because even if there are no essential or necessary truths to access, there are always real, effective goals to pursue.

McChesney claims that in order to reach their progressive goals, the task of cultural studies and radical intellectuals is to "constantly battle depoliticization" and "make the connections" (81). Work in the true cultural studies spirit, therefore, is most often directed at current cultural and political situations and takes a clear position and/or suggests specific transformative action. These features are consistently illustrated in the articles of *Cultural Studies ⇔ Critical Methodologies*. Recent examples include Douglas Kellner's "Media Propaganda and Spectacle in the War on Iraq: A Critique of U.S. Broadcasting Networks" and Henry Giroux's "Beyond Belief: Religious Fundamentalism and Cultural Politics in the Age of George W. Bush." This brand of cultural studies applies the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the movement to contemporary relations of power and does not hesitate to attack the current administration as an embodiment of the oppressive order cultural studies proponents seek to overthrow. For example, Peter McLaren and Martin Gregory's "The Legend of the Bush Gang: Imperialism, War, and Propaganda" argues that the Bush administration:

> is using the external "international crisis" [of the war on terrorism] to override the remnants of U.S. bourgeois democracy in order to reestablish conditions of profitability. Perhaps not surprisingly, at least from a Marxist perspective, the supporting repressive (e.g., the Department of

> Homeland Security's secret police) and ideological state apparatuses (e.g., schools and the corporate media) have played a profound role in building support for the Bush gang's totalizing ambitions. (281)

Students are likely to find the theoretical foundations of such studies daunting, and a significant number will be even more uncomfortable with the overt political attacks.[17] These student reactions certainly pose challenges for classroom integrations of cultural studies, but the debates such cultural and political critiques are likely to produce also introduce the vitality and relevance most teachers hope to achieve through the study of popular texts and contexts.

Popular culture studies also has its political elements, but they have generally been more understated and less overtly leftist or activist. The founders of the popular culture studies movement saw their work as a political statement in that it turned academic attention to the concerns of everyday people, particularly those who had been marginalized in a number of ways, and challenged the domination of knowledge by the academic and cultural elite. But rather than putting an emphasis on direct intervention *into* cultural contexts, many popular culture scholars have suggested that they have an impact through expanding knowledge *about* cultural contexts. Because this political orientation is more in line with American values about higher education, and because popular culture studies makes fewer direct critiques of existing capitalist and democratic

[17] Conservative attacks on liberal academia are nothing new, but the current cultural climate certainly supports suspicion of liberal cultural critique. In 2004, three students sued the University of North Carolina over a required reading that offended their Christian values. Last year, an alumni organization at UCLA offered cash rewards to students for turning in professors who discussed liberal political issues in class. While liberal professors find these tactics misguided and oppressive, they are a reminder that educators should structure debate on political issues in ways that don't silence or alienate any student group. Because liberals and democrats do statistically outnumber conservatives on college faculty, particularly in English departments, we must act responsibly to defuse student suspicions and promote truly open inquiry.

norms, its practice in scholarship and pedagogy is less likely to be seen as "political" by the American public, but it has a clear agenda nonetheless. In his introduction to the *Handbook of American Popular Culture*, M. Thomas Inge claims:

> The serious and systematic study of popular culture may be the most significant and potentially useful of the trends in academic research and teaching in the last half of this century in the United States. Scholarly study in this area will help modern society understand itself better and provide new avenues and methods for bringing to bear on contemporary problems the principles and traditions of humanism. (qtd. in Dunne 132)

Because popular texts reflect cultural conditions, they can help us diagnose and call attention to a variety of social ills.

Cultural critics and consumers can also intervene in cultural conditions by shaping popular texts. For example, Cawelti promotes an optimistic view of the transformative power of popular culture studies on two levels. In the first instance, he argues that widely heterogeneous audiences enjoy the same popular texts, and their ability to "respond to particular features of accessible popular formula stories—for instance, a desire for redemption or a yearning for justice—will make it difficult for individuals to marginalize or scapegoat people whose cultures and histories are different or alternative" (qtd. in Tatum 84). Elsewhere, Cawelti writes that popular culture criticism can improve our quality of life by promoting the highest quality of popular culture and helping audiences see how they can shape cultural texts to reflect positive values ("With Benefit" 374). These sentiments are indicative of the affirmative

democratic politics of much work in popular culture studies, which is in general more populist and more pro-capitalist than cultural studies.

Joseph Slade represents another element in popular culture studies that is suspicious of the overtly political project of cultural studies. He claims that while it "is fashionable to construe everything these days in terms of political power, and paranoia adds urgency to conflicting ideologies," jumping into the ideological fray may not be in the best interests of popular culture studies as a field (162). Cultural studies proponents have often criticized popular culture critics for an uncritical celebration of pop culture because they do not practice the same kind of left-leaning, politically pro-active criticism, but Slade suggests that, while the critical project might uncover political interests, political interests should not pre-determine the course or outcome of the inquiry. This argument harkens back to the suspicion of overtly leftist politics that characterized old school popular culture studies as well as important debates in composition studies. But it is dangerous to equate being less overtly political with being apolitical. Popular culture studies is informed by a liberal, populist politics that seeks to empower citizens by emphasizing the egalitarian aspects of popular culture and the common people's ability to shape culture as consumers.

While popular culture studies has traditionally offered more positive treatments of the power relations that shape culture than the cynical readings of capital-driven culture supported by cultural studies, this brush should not be used to paint all popular culture scholars. Many undoubtedly share the same beliefs as the prominent cultural studies scholars I have mentioned, and an increasing number are sharing their strong political readings in their scholarship. Karen J. Hall's recent *JPC* article, "A Soldier's Body: GI

Joe, Hasbro's Great American Hero, and the Symptoms of Empire" certainly suggests that this is the case. Hall's work, which includes discussion of how the Tet Offensive, OPEC, and hegemonic masculinity shaped the appearance of GI Joe action figues, falls within the conjunctural paradigm of cultural studies while her critique of American imperialism and "George W. Bush's war mongering" (52) stems from a specific, leftist ideological reading and bears similarities to the cultural studies critiques discussed above.

Similarly, there are cultural studies scholars who embrace more positive democratic attitudes of popular culture studies. Joke Hermes argues that popular culture "is the most democratic of domains in our society, regardless of the commercial and governmental interests and investments that co-shape its form and contents" (3). Hermes elaborates a concept of cultural citizenship based on the public sphere of popular culture that is simultaneously symbolic and very real. Dick Hebdige has argued that "affective alliances" forged through popular culture can bring together people from different countries, races, and classes, and he recognizes "the positive potentialities of such populist phenomena as Band Aid" for initiating substantive political and humanitarian activism (Leitch, *Cultural* 156-159). In general, however, cultural studies has remained cynical of the potential for popular culture to challenge entrenched ideologies or promote radical collective action.

As I mentioned earlier, cultural studies has often been conducted in negative terms because of its revolutionary and very serious beginnings. The negative constructions of culture that were perhaps the only sane response to fascism resulted in theories of cultural studies that now read to some as irretrievably pessimistic. Horkheimer and Adorno's polemic against "The Culture Industry" is an excellent

example; it is full of important critical insights, but it is also thoroughly depressing in its insistence on an all-powerful cultural machine and an oppressed and/or thoughtless population subject to its waste productions. Within this system, pleasure is characterized in negative terms: "Pleasure always means not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown. Basically it is helplessness. It is flight; not as is asserted, flight from wretched reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance" (86). As the object of the culture industry, pleasure is suspected of facilitating manipulation or oblivion and even "the most intimate reactions of human beings" are based on "the model served up by the culture industry" (101). If our very subjectivity and affective responses are conditioned by dominant hegemonic forces, then pleasure cannot be construed in positive terms as a path to liberation or intellection.[18]

Such pessimistic views of popular culture were not limited to cultural studies scholars. For example, Henry Winthrop's 1968 *JPC* article "Pop art as an Expression of Decadence" offers a withering critique of pop art and mass culture:

> This type of decadence, in a very real sense, represents the emergence of what can only be called the new mindlessness of our own time—a mindlessness which is fast becoming one of the paramount features of sensate culture . . . [and] is deepening for modern mass-man, under the onslaughts of science and technology and the complex, social impacts which they are creating for modern, urban life. In particular, it is a

[18] The integration of post-structuralism introduced a new potential for affective engagement with texts into the field of cultural criticism. In "From Work to Text," Barthes differentiates between the passive pleasure of consumption associated with traditional reading and the more active jouissance of textual engagement after the deconstructive turn, a bliss that is not marred by the insurmountable separation of production and consumption (1010).

> mindlessness and a moral insensitivity to the individual and social evils of the modern community. It represents a complete unawareness of the manner in which the unmanaged introduction of science and technology into modern life is deeply associated with the evils of unchecked urbanization. (236)

While a number of popular culture scholars recognized the potentially negative aspects of mass culture, popular culture studies has consistently been more optimistic and has sought to reduce the distance between academics and everyday people through its populist representations of popular texts and activities. Robert H. Canary's "Playing the Game of Life," also published in '68, discusses how the board games *Life* and *Monopoly* reflect the dominant economic models and cultural values of their time, but his critical reading is more flippantly satirical than the serious critiques common in cultural studies. Another article in the same issue provides an historical overview of automobile humor that reflects how popular culture studies has also generally been more interested in the "fun" elements of pop culture.

It may seem that I am establishing a reductive political-affective binary with a negative-critical cultural studies on the left and a positive-critical popular culture studies on the right. I do not wish to deny the political complexities inherent in either field, but to summarize the general political position associated with contemporary cultural studies, especially as practiced in American English studies, and suggest an alternative political construction for cultural critique that might help balance current practice. It is important to recognize the politics and attitudes associated with cultural studies and popular culture

studies because these philosophical leanings, even when they go unstated, directly affect the research these communities produce and the pedagogies they promote.

Practice

At the level of practice, we again find similarities between cultural studies and popular culture studies, but also significant and politically-inflected differences. Although cultural studies has in many instances come to be associated with high theory, the movement had practical, pedagogical beginnings. As Grossberg explains:

> All of the founding figures of cultural studies (including Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall) started their careers, and their intellectual projects, in the field of education, outside the university, in extramural departments and adult working-class courses . . . Such pedagogical contexts, which existed outside the formal educational institutions of the state, served people (primarily women and the working class) who were deprived of any opportunity for, indeed actively 'blocked from,' any higher education. (*Bringing* 375)

In light of this early pedagogical focus, Grossberg notes that "the relative absence of education in the body of texts that have come to constitute (British) cultural studies" is ironic (376). There have been exceptions, of course. Stuart Hall's 1964 *The Popular Arts*, contains a section on education that "traces the connection between 'The Curriculum and the Popular Arts' and includes projects for teaching" (Uchmanowicz 7). There was also an Education Working Group established at the Centre in the mid '70s which continued to conduct research and publish into the 90s (Grossberg, *Bringing* 376).

As early as the ‘70s, cultural studies approaches began to find a home in education departments in the US and in the works of scholars like Michael Apple and Henry Giroux, who prefigured the cultural studies boom in American educational contexts of the late-‘80s and ‘90s (Grossberg, *Bringing* 377). Bethany Ogdon offers an extended description of the early educational mission of cultural studies, which she characterizes as “democratizing, contestatory, and unwaveringly pedagogical” (501). Cultural studies pedagogy prompted students to tackle real-world problems that truly concerned them. Ogdon concludes:

> For cultural studies, then, pedagogy cannot be divorced from politics, lived experience, or an intense sense of *caring* about something that really matters. At least in the beginning, its pedagogical practice was not aimed at transferring to students knowledges that would enable them to occupy their positions in the educated classes with comfort and self-confidence. For cultural studies the pedagogical enterprise was much more about discomfort than comfort. It was also about understanding and *effecting* social change. (502)

This description reflects the theoretical and political commitments characteristic of cultural studies scholarship, particularly in its Marxist critique of the role of education in ensconcing privilege and its support of transformative political action. For these scholar-teacher-activists, pedagogy was not ancillary to their theoretical or political projects; all were woven into a unified mission of inquiry, articulation, and action.

Unfortunately, such pedagogical commitment has not manifest itself in most American cultural studies scholarship, which often stops short of discussing classroom

practice in any detail. And the bulk of publications in cultural studies and education, like those by Giroux and his colleagues, focus on primary and secondary education and thus are not as easily applicable to college curricula as we may like. This gap reflects the institutional elitism of much contemporary cultural studies and the tendency for scholars at colleges and research universities to privilege theory over classroom practice. As Grossberg notes, such pedagogical elision and academic elitism go against the extra-institutional mission of the movement's founders; their passionate commitment to pedagogy, therefore, is another element of old school cultural studies that compositionists can reclaim in support of their own educational projects.

Because the current project is most concerned with classroom practice, I realize that I am emphasizing a rather narrow definition of pedagogy within the institutional space of higher education. I do not, however, wish to slight the educational work that cultural studies can accomplish just because cultural studies scholars are less likely to discuss concrete classroom applications. For example, Grossberg emphasizes the role of theorists as public intellectuals. He cites Gramsci's aphorism "that there are two functions of the public intellectual: the first is to know more than the other side; the second is to share that knowledge," but argues that cultural studies has largely failed in the second respect and that "it remains largely an academic discourse encircled by its theoretical vocabulary" (*Bringing* 268). I will discuss issues of style and accessibility in a moment, but first I want to note Grossberg's contention that this theoretical vocabulary is necessary to the production of knowledge in this complex field, and that "production

and distribution, however closely articulated, are not the same" (269).[19] Grossberg therefore concludes, "perhaps we need to think about educating and training students who consciously think of themselves as the translators of knowledge into the public realm, as cultural workers in a variety of institutional sites" (*Bringing* 269). This dissertation seeks to perform such a translation for practitioners in rhetoric and composition who are, in turn, well-versed in sharing complicated concepts in a comprehensible way with broader audiences.

The importance of translating and sharing knowledge is also recognized by the popular culture studies community, which has been passionately, and more consistently, concerned with pedagogy. Although their articulation of pedagogy's connection to politics differs from that within cultural studies, the founders of the movement saw an understanding of popular culture as crucial to an educated citizenry. According to Browne, "A democratic people that is not fluent in the media of communication cannot create a society that will stand" (qtd. in Hoppenstand 63). Popular culture studies therefore demonstrates a liberal political stance and a concern with democracy, populism, and pluralism that has clear implications for classroom practice. Stephen Tatum explains the connection between popular culture studies' pluralism and its educational project:

> Because its approach basically assumes competing views should have equal access to a discursive arena and that values, knowledge, and a consensus–however provisional–will emerge as a result of 'free'

[19] While I agree with Grossberg that those who theorize culture need not be the same people who share those theories with broader audiences, there is no reason that one cannot engage in both activities. Many scholars and teachers engage in multiple roles as intellectuals, and indeed it is often best if they remain distinct. For example, I believe that is desirable for professors to take transformative political action as public intellectuals, but I do not agree with some cultural studies scholars that one should use the classroom as a site for promoting one's own political agenda. I will return to this distinction in Chapter Four.

> deliberative discussion by a literate, educated public, the pluralist is always interested in pedagogy, in talking to somebody about something with an instructional purpose in mind. (81-82)

From this perspective, educators contribute to the critical education of their students by presenting competing interpretations of popular texts and topics and imparting the skills students need to in order to develop and communicate their own interpretations.

Browne has characterized popular culture studies as "the practical—pragmatic—humanities" ("Popular" 1) and the field's pedagogical interventions have thus been consistently practical and concrete. The essays in *Pioneers in Popular Culture* include many references to the importance of pedagogy to even the most prominent popular culture scholars. For example, Maurice Hungiville describes how well Russell Nye blended research, teaching, and public service to meet his goal of training well-rounded "graduate students who could also merge scholarship with teaching; the graduate students would be 'equipped in the traditional sense' but they would also 'recognize in teaching and research the connections between them and the social, historical, and cultural backgrounds of the students they teach and the traditions they live within (172). This focus on students' contexts in teaching and research further highlights popular culture studies' emphasis on pedagogy and rejection of elite academic attitudes that neglect or disparage students' lived experience and tastes. Similarly, Michael K. Schoenecke writes in praise of popular culture scholar Peter C. Rollins, whose teaching and mentoring have added as much to the field as his PCA administration and work on Will Rogers. He notes that unlike many Regents Professors (or professors in general), Rollins is devoted not only to graduate courses in his area but to undergraduate "service courses" as well (189).

From its inception, The Popular Culture Association devoted itself to helping educators. The first list of PCA conference areas included "Popular Culture and Curricula," and the category remains to this day. Browne recalls:

> During the first few years the PCA was very conscious of the newness of the subject matter in popular culture and the need to assist teachers as much as possible in the art of teaching the subject. Therefore we had numerous "How-To" sessions at our meetings which were dedicated not only to how to teach popular culture, but also to what materials were available and how they could be obtained. (*Against* 31)

While Marshall Fishwick was PCA president (1972-74), he and Browne even established a Popular Culture Association Advisory Faculty "to assist any university, college, junior college or public school in improving its curriculum by introducing or developing courses in Popular Culture (Browne, *Against* 27). These pedagogical activities reflect the hands-on, among-the-people approach that has characterized much popular culture studies scholarship.

Popular culture studies scholars' outreach to community colleges and public schools reflects their resistance to institutional elitism and makes most work in popular cultural studies accessible to instructors and students in a variety of educational contexts. Another reason for the accessibility of scholarship in popular culture studies is an overt commitment to such accessibility as reflected in the movement's attitude toward research and style. For example, one interesting characteristic of much popular culture scholarship is its clear, personable style and acceptance of the personal narrative form. Browne's *Against Academia* is essentially a first person narrative, complete with brief discussions

of his childhood and family life as it related to his academic work and descriptions of the accommodations and entertainment at various conferences. Fishwick's *Seven Pillars of Popular Culture* is a survey of the field, but his prelude begins with a personal narrative about a trek through the jungle to Kalimantan. The rest of the book blends thorough scholarly references to the classics and theory with subjective speculation and a conversational style littered with witty exclamations. The essays in *Pioneers in Popular Culture Studies* also illustrate this blend of academic analysis and personal reaction to the texts and authors under consideration. There is frequent use of the first person and a casual, readable style. Many of the profiles in *Pioneers in Popular Culture Studies* also include information about the scholars' personal lives. In several cases, descriptions of proletariat backgrounds and other outsider experiences help explain why the author embraced popular culture studies.

Likewise, many of the essays in the *Pioneers* volume make specific mention of the scholars' attitudes toward research and style. Toth and Koppelman describe the essays in the collection *Images of Women* as "written in an accessible style, in accord with the assumption among popular culturists that scholars' discoveries should be knowledge that can be communicated to everyone with vigor and imagination" (147). The same attitude toward style is illustrated in the work of founding father Russel B. Nye. Always seeking the widest audience, "Nye never lapsed into a specialized, professional vocabulary. He had a gift for lucid, unpretentious prose because he was an unpretentious person, a scholar who would sometimes satirize the heavy language of criticism" (Hungiville 180). All of these comments reflect stylistic manifestations of the populist and democratic pedagogical values of the popular culture studies movement.

Gary Edgerton explains that popular culture approaches have "accentuated the viewpoint and orientation of the mass consumer, rather than the professional movie critic" (43). Edgerton argues, for example, that "popular film theory and criticism should be as democratized as the media art that it strives to define, interpret, and analyze" (44). This assumption manifests itself in several ways. 1) All types of films from action blockbusters to educational documentaries to pornography are seen as suitable subjects for study. 2) Pop culture film scholars see themselves as "full-fledged members of the respective audiences that attend to these various kinds of films," not as detached critics with privileged insight, and their works are "intended and designed to be read discussed, debated, and hopefully appreciated by fellow viewers." 3) To achieve this end, these writers attempt to "decipher and demystify any conceptual models and wordings that are markedly arcane" as they integrate various theoretical postures into their work by avoiding "particularized jargon, as much as possible, if in fact the same speculative frameworks and methodologies can be presented in less alienating language." (Edgerton 44) As Edgerton's overview suggests, the pluralism, populism, interdisciplinarity, and stylistic approaches to scholarship that define popular culture approaches to film also define the larger popular culture studies movement.

Cultural studies has been far less concerned with accessibility. In another somewhat ironic theory-practice split, cultural studies scholarship designed to improve the lot of common people is often completely incomprehensible to them, and, though cultural studies scholars recognize the important role of the scholar's perspective in shaping the critical project, the scholar is rarely present through conversational style or anecdotal evidence. For example, John Storey's survey *Cultural Studies and the Study of*

Popular Culture: Theories and Methods includes only use of the first person, in the introduction where he explains his goals and methods for the book. Then, on the first page we find the impersonal "It is hoped the book will provide. . ." and the first chapter plunges promptly into theory—often presented in terms and sentence structures intended for a highly sophisticated intellectual readership. Several of Grossberg's works are more self-referential (in part because his own work has played a large part in the field that is the object of his metacriticism), but he, too, writes in a complicated, jargon-heavy style and often resorts to impersonal constructions and somewhat tortured sentence structures. Consider, for example, Grossberg's description of the evolution of cultural studies, cited at the beginning of this chapter, in which he references Althusser, Marx, Hall, and the confrontations of humanism and anti-humanism—all in one sentence.

Even in publications intended for a broader readership, proponents of cultural studies often rely on discussions of theory more than practical illustrations that might clarify their position for non-experts. For example, the purpose of George and Trimbur's chapter on "Cultural Studies and Composition" in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* is ostensibly to explain cultural studies pedagogies as part of a guide intended "to help graduate students and new writing teachers orient themselves within our ongoing discussions" (vi). This tightly packed overview, however, devotes more space to histories and definitions of cultural studies than to its connections in composition, and the connections discussion is marked by a number of quick theoretical references and dropped names that would need to be explained more fully for the novice audience. Furthermore, while George and Trimbur provide discussions of many of the philosophical and political debates surrounding cultural studies and popular culture in the

classroom, their section on "Cultural Studies, Composition, and Classroom Practice" doesn't contain descriptions of any specific lesson plans or assignments to ground their sophisticated but abstract overview. Thus, even this pedagogical treatment illustrates the theory-practice split that marks cultural studies scholarship and the elite academic nature of discussions in the field.

As mentioned above, Grossberg does not apologize for the elite vocabulary and complexity of cultural studies scholarship; he notes that specialists from medical doctors to auto mechanics employ technical jargon without eliciting the criticism leveled at cultural critics. This is why Shumway argues that even if pop culture scholars think of themselves as highly accessible, the study of popular culture is always part of a professional discourse. While the specialized language of post-structuralism often draws charges of exclusivity and elitism from members of the academy who do not use this language, their own language is just as likely the be perceived as exclusive by a non-academic audience" (167). Thus there is a continuum of style and complexity in treatments of pop culture in both fields, with popular publications themselves at one end and highly theoretical pop culture criticism at the other.

While the specific theoretical discourse Grossberg defends is important for facilitating the creation and circulation of knowledge among experts, popular culture studies' concern for accessibility facilitates the wider distribution of academic writing. These divergent styles clearly illustrate the role of the rhetorical situation and discourse communities in shaping texts. In this way, scholarship from cultural studies and popular culture studies can provide us not only with theoretical and methodological support for our work, but simultaneously with examples of the rhetorical concepts and stylistic

strategies that are an important aspect of our curricula. This contrast in style also reflects the underlying attitudes toward pop culture and academic scholarship that distinguish the two disciplines.

The theoretical, methodological, political, and practical distinctions discussed in this chapter should be considered before employing cultural studies or popular culture studies texts and approaches in composition, and should guide which ones we adopt for specific pedagogical goals. I agree with Grossberg when he says, "I would, like Cornel West, argue that the key question is not where you begin but what you do with the resources you find there, how you inflect them into specific contextual politics and institutional histories in order to end up somewhere else" (*Bringing* 300). Cultural studies and popular culture studies offer us many conceptual and methodological resources; it is up to us to learn from them and adapt them into well-informed and well-structured composition curricula. Chapter Four suggests how theoretical, political, and practical insights from cultural studies and popular culture studies can inform pedagogies that tap the vast potential of pop culture to meet accepted outcomes for first-year composition.

Chapter Four

Which Way Should We Go? Three Main Roads and Some Detailed Directions for Popular Culture in Composition

My goal in this chapter is to suggest how the content and methods of cultural studies and popular culture studies discussed in Chapter Three might be purposefully appropriated to correct several of the weaknesses in current popular culture-based composition pedagogies discussed at the end of Chapter Two. These problems with current practice—the emphasis on consumption over production, the failure to balance attention to texts and contexts, the difficulty of negotiating political aspects of popular culture, etc.—may be why some teachers and writing program administrators have expressed concern over the very premise of basing composition assignments in popular culture. During one discussion of popular culture in composition on the WPA-L that echoed the Berlin-Hairston debates of the early '90s, several WPAs complained that "popular culture often takes over as the subject of the writing classroom" (Hodges) and "we [don't] need more comp courses focusing on some abstract subject matter like popular culture. We need to focus our attention on creating assignments based on considerations of what knowledge and skills we believe our students need" (Nelms). These concerns may be well founded, but integrating popular culture and designing thoughtful assignments based on desired outcomes need not be antithetical.

This chapter presents a hermeneutic and heuristic guide for integrating popular culture in composition curricula based on theories, practices, and texts from cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies. While a number of the practices discussed have already found their way into writing classrooms in various guises, their implementation has been far from systematic or consistent. Furthermore, as the writing program administrators cited above are well aware, composition assignments dealing with popular culture (as well as plenty that have nothing to do with pop culture) often are not designed with clear educational goals in mind. The link between assignments and outcomes should be explicit, and I will chart these connections as I map three main roads and some detailed directions for navigating popular culture-based composition pedagogy.

Three Main Roads and Their Composition Studies Foundations

The taxonomic categories presented here are both descriptive and prescriptive. I am mapping approaches based on what compositionists are already doing, but also on what we should be doing to make the most of popular culture in composition. For centuries, rhetoricians and educators have struggled to define a comprehensive, functional model for textual production and consumption, but the triangles and pentads used for practical purposes always fall short of the complexity of textual relations. To chart the myriad connections between individuals, texts, and contexts, we need a more sophisticated model that recognizes a variety of options for negotiating the complex rhetorical terrain of the 21st century. Fortunately, the complexity of the world wide web as it has expanded through recent decades and the software we use to navigate its vast content offer us a way of thinking and talking about textual relations that was not

available to earlier scholars whose mapping metaphors ended with fixed, two-dimensional representations. In order to tap into the potential of the web, however, we need tools for filtering and navigating its contents. The goal of this chapter is to suggest a balanced pedagogical system that encourages us to navigate the web of textuality in a manner that follows predictable patterns while recognizing the complex and often unpredictable relations involved in any textual engagement.

Because the web is so vast, we can only concentrate on a limited amount of data at a given time, and the same is true when we approach texts. The pedagogical system outlined here consists of three categories or levels of concentration defined by the elements of the text, context, and process they emphasize in order to achieve certain pedagogical goals. *Functional* approaches emphasize the text itself and include methods common to cultural studies, popular culture studies, and composition studies concerned with formalist readings of pop-culture texts. The functional category also includes pedagogies that use popular culture primarily to teach specific textual functions or rhetorical skills. To a certain extent, all approaches to popular culture in composition are functional in that the primary goal is improved writing; the study of popular culture is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. *Relational* approaches, which are more common in popular culture studies, foreground relationships between texts and individuals with an emphasis on the affective aspects of production and consumption. These include relationships between authors and the texts they produce as well as the relationships between audiences and the texts they experience. *Conjunctural* approaches, based in cultural studies, pursue more comprehensive critical projects that analyze the production, distribution and consumption of texts as well as historical, cultural, and

political contexts. These approaches investigate how contexts influence texts and how specific texts in turn influence their contexts. The progression between these three areas of concentration reflects the negotiation of structuralist and culturalists theories and methods discussed in Chapter Three.

Each of these "main roads" is a two-way street of consumption and production, and therefore I am simultaneously setting up a hermeneutic guide for the interpretation and analysis of texts as well as a heuristic for the composition of texts. In analysis, we start from the extant text and move outward, from a discussion of textual features (functional) to discussions of the audience responses those features evoke (relational) and how the text shapes and is shaped by certain contexts (conjunctural). In producing texts, we move in the opposite direction. We begin from the conjunctural moment that calls for the production of a text, then, based on that context, we decide what we wish to accomplish, and finally we make choices about the specific strategies and textual features that are most likely to achieve our goals. One weakness of many current approaches to popular culture is that they privilege analysis or make no direct connection between consumption and production at the practical level. This system seeks a more productive balance of these elements to inform a process pedagogy based on context-specific rhetorical analysis and application rather than interpretation and mimicry.

While I present these levels of concentration through the spatial metaphor of moving outward from text to context and back, I do not want to imply fixed categories or a linear model of progression. The functional, relational, and conjunctural categories presented here are elastic and interwoven in a number of ways, constituting more of a flexible guide for textual analysis and production than a rigid methodology. For the sake

of any one textual analysis or production, that text becomes the center of the web. From that center, a number of threads connect to the individuals who take part in the construction of meaning for the text, such as authors, editors, publishers, and audience members. Through each of these intersections, the text is connected to a number of other texts that each individual has consumed and produced, resulting in intertextual meanings that extend beyond the communicative intent of any individual text. Furthermore, each individual and each text intersects with a number of physical and ideological conditions or contexts. While we cannot encompass the entirety and complexity of the web, it constitutes the full conjunctural condition of existence for any textual encounter. The reaches that we can investigate make up analytical field for any critical project. Each individual relation to the text, and the concrete features of the text itself, are subsumed by the conjunctural web, but the creation of each new text changes the shape of that web and the potential (hyper)textual paths our critiques might take.

Because there are so many connections within the web, there is no necessary progression from point A to point B, but many possible and real progressions. Therefore, though I will speak in practical terms about progressing from the center outward, it is important to recognize that in theoretical terms we can start from any location on the web. The specific issues and examples discussed below present several of many intersections between the various levels of engagement. This system is also based on the understanding that we can move through the web in many ways, but we always start where we are. Our critical position is as determined by the web of textuality as the features of the texts we critique. Therefore, while it is functional to speak in a detached

way about the formal features of a text, this analysis is always preceded by our relation to the text, which is influenced by our location within the larger intertextual web.

Because most compositionists will engage with my text as part of the larger web of texts about approaches to composition, I want to pre-emptively highlight some likely connections. Because this taxonomy emphasizes "different elements of the communicative transaction," it bears some similarities to Richard Fulkerson's "Four Philosophies of Composition." But because this system is process-oriented and ideologically-inflected, it also calls upon certain elements of Berlin's taxonomies in "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories" and "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." Therefore, it is useful to begin this discussion by giving a fuller definition of each level of concentration and clarifying the similarities and differences between my conceptual map and theirs.

Fulkerson delineates four approaches to composition pedagogy based on the element of the communicative interaction they emphasize, connecting expressive philosophies with emphasis on the writer, mimetic philosophies with reality, rhetorical philosophies with the reader, and formalist philosophies with the work itself (4). Berlin, however, argues against "the contention that the differences in approaches to teaching writing can be explained by attending to the degree of emphasis given to universally defined elements of a universally defined composing process" ("Contemporary" 9). Instead, each pedagogical approach is defined by a different way of envisioning all of the components of process as well as the process itself. Berlin's earlier taxonomy identified four approaches—the Neo-Aristotelians or Classicists, the Positivists or Current-Traditionalists, the Neo-Platonists or Expressionists, and the New Rhetoricians—each

with its own ideological agenda ("Contemporary" 10-20). Several years later, Berlin presented a different ideological taxonomy for rhetorical approaches that discussed cognitive rhetoric, expressionistic rhetoric, and social-epistemic rhetoric. He privileges social-epistemic rhetoric, but admits that it is "the least formulaic and the most difficult to carry out" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 697). The system I propose does differentiate approaches based on the element of communication they emphasize, but my treatment of each element is inflected by a social-epistemic philosophy of composing. Because social-epistemic approaches are less systematic and have not generally attended to the technical and affective elements of composing, however, the framework proposed here is designed to present a more orderly map for working through all levels of the composing process.

The functional level, which emphasizes the text itself, naturally calls to mind Fulkerson's philosophy of formalism and invokes Berlin's current-traditional school of rhetoric, with its emphasis on arrangement and style. While I do not wish to invite associations with the positivist ideology Berlin equates with the current-traditional school, I do wish to maintain a place for formalist textual analysis and a concern for the surface features of composition. As discussed in Chapter Two, Kristine Blair critiques composition texts that "stress cultural forms over cultural content," focus solely on formal elements at the expense of context or cultural codings, and essentially affirm traditional literary canons by adding pop content to existing structures and subjecting it to identical methods of critique (182-183). As an over-correction for the many failures of product-based, error-centric pedagogies, recent scholarship and pedagogy has largely neglected formal elements. In practice, however, most instructors still evaluate students based on the formal features that they no longer teach, which results in the "value/mode

confusion" that prompted Fulkerson to define the philosophies that inform our practice. I have not chosen "formal" for the designation of the functional category, however, because I wish to promote a richer version of text-based analysis. First and foremost, our concern with formal elements and surface features should not be dictated by strict adherence to grammatical rules or approximations of some ideal text. Instead, we should examine surface features in terms of conventional usage determined by context, and we should emphasize the role of stylistic and mechanical elements in establishing an author's credibility and a text's effectiveness. Furthermore, the functional category includes several analytical approaches that are based primarily in the text, but point beyond the text itself, such as rhetorical analysis, genre and formula criticism, and discussions of aesthetics. Essentially, the functional level entails all critical approaches concerned primarily with textual features, while intertextual threads connect this category to relational and conjunctural approaches.

I also prefer the term functional because it emphasizes composition's concern for how textual features *work*—how specific structures or strategies achieve specific effects. This is crucial for the heuristic aspect of functional analysis. When we examine the effect of textual features and consider why the author may have made specific technical choices, we expand our own rhetorical and stylistic repertoire and become more aware of organization, revision and editing as important parts of the creative process. Because of this important connection to process, I have included within the functional category those pedagogical approaches to popular culture that are primarily concerned with teaching compositional skills, though several aspects of process—invention, research, prewriting,

etc.—can be taught effectively through relational and conjunctural approaches, as illustrated in the following discussions of each category.

The relational level of engagement entails several aspects of what Fulkerson calls the "expressive philosophy" and Berlin terms "expressionistic rhetoric," but again I wish to promote a more complicated, dialectical approach to the affective elements of composing.[20] First, because this category includes our personal relationships with texts through production and reception, relational approaches include not only Fulkerson's "expressive" philosophy, which emphasizes the writer, but also his "rhetorical" philosophy, with its concern for audience. Several elements of expressivism are valuable for pop-based pedagogies because we do have strong affective reactions to our culture that can infuse our analysis of and writing about popular texts. In emphasizing expressivism's attention to the author's personal engagement with his or her work, however, compositionists should flip the traditional expressivist script by replacing the concept of autonomous, authentic individuals with intersubjective, socially-constructed agents. Relational approaches do not treat students/writers as theoretical constructs, but as experiencing, thinking, acting subjects. Instead of writing about emotions, relational

[20] In *Media Culture*, Douglas Kellner outlines a cultural studies method that involves reading films and other media texts "contextually" and "relationally." Reading contextually implies analyzing "cultural texts in terms of actual struggles within contemporary culture and society, situating ideological analysis within existing socio-political debates and conflicts." Reading relationally involves situating films "within their genres or cycles, as well as within their historical, socio-political, and economic context . . . seeing how they relate to other films within the set, and how the genres transcode ideological positions." For example, Kellner discusses reading *Rambo* and *Top Gun* as among a group of films that "represent aggressively right wing positions on war, militarism, and communism that served as soft- and hard-core propaganda for Reaganism and a distinctly right-wing interventionist military strategy" while realistic war films like *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* and satirical films like *A Few Good Men* and *Spies Like Us* "present more critical versions" of the military and government ideologies. (101-103) My use of the term relational is not consistent with Kellner's, as it emphasizes a different set of relationships. Kellner's relational readings actually rely on what I define as a blend of functional and conjunctural methods, and the goals of both analyses fall within the conjunctural paradigm.

approaches to composition are concerned with emotions about writing, both the reader's affective reaction to texts and the writer's emotional experience of producing texts. Whereas expressivist pedagogies have called for academic writing about personal subjects, this pedagogy promotes personal engagement with academic subjects. Treating process on the relational level also includes engagement with discursive communities, and promotes the role of collaboration in the creation of texts and subjectivities.

My concern with dialectic and the social construction of subjectivity locates this pedagogy within the frame of Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric, which situates knowledge as the product of "the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 692). Berlin draws heavily on the cultural studies tradition via Marx and Raymond Williams in establishing the contextual and political nature of rhetoric and, therefore, of rhetorical instruction. The introduction of discourse communities and material conditions marks the conjunctural level of my critical framework, which, in keeping with Grossberg's theories of conjuncture and articulation discussed in Chapter Three, is designed to investigate as many relationships within the web of textuality as possible. Conjunctural analysis takes into account a wide range of historical, geographical, cultural, political, economic, biographical, and ideological contexts in addition to the usual textual categories of context based on purpose, genre, or period. We examine how these factors have influenced extant texts and how texts shape their contexts in turn. We can then ask students to consider how the specific conjunctural moment of their text calls for specific choices and how they hope their texts will influence existing conditions.

In promoting rich contextual knowledge based on extensive research, conjunctural approaches can also be compared with the second aspect of Fulkerson's "mimetic" philosophy of composition, which "says that students do not write well on significant matters because they do not know enough. One resulting methodology is to emphasize research during the prewriting stages; another is to emphasize heuristic systems. Still another is the use of a topically arranged anthology of readings" (5-6). The system I propose involves research, heuristics, *and* the investigation of topics or themes in popular texts, and it is *mimetic* in the sense that I do believe that the student writing that follows conjunctural investigations can better reflect the "real situation" of textual and material relations. I am wary of certain connotations of mimesis, however, because this pedagogy is designed to build on the knowledge that students already possess, while the mimetic philosophy described by Fulkerson starts from an assumed lack of knowledge. Furthermore, our goal should be to help students pursue their own projects, not copy the critical projects or writing styles of others.

I want to emphasize that composition curricula built on this framework should always keep the students, their goals, and their writing at the center of classroom practice. Because conjunctural approaches are aligned with social-epistemic rhetoric and draw heavily on cultural studies, they are concerned with the investigation of politics and ideology, but our role as educators should be to guide our students in *their* explorations of how material, ideological, and textual forces intersect, not to enforce *our* readings of those structures. Some approaches based in cultural studies seem more concerned with subverting the capitalist hegemony than with supporting their students' inquiry and expression—an intention clearly felt and resented by many students. Conjunctural

approaches that represent the best of cultural-studies composition can temper this political agenda by emphasizing students' political desires and not those of the instructor. This may seem to contradict the interventionist agenda of cultural studies, but we must recall Grossberg's recognition that the voice/position of the critic is determining and Kellner's call for cultural critics to intervene in favor of the side *they perceive* to be more progressive. The scholar's position shapes the critical project, and in our courses the students are the scholars. If we allow our critical positions to shape the course of the class, we deny student agency in the endeavor and preclude any possibility of authentic dialogue or real cultural studies happening.

This is, of course, a fine and controversial distinction because we are to an extent authors of our courses and in the very act of setting the agenda for the course we privilege certain texts and goals over others. The role of politics in the classroom has been a controversial subject for decades, and I cannot treat the scholarly debate or pedagogical complexities surrounding these issues within the scope of this project. I agree with Berlin's assertion that "Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 697). I also know that it is virtually impossible to avoid politics in composition because popular culture, current events, and the problems students want to write about always involve material and ideological conflicts. But this is another area where taking a balanced approach that draws on resources from both cultural studies and popular culture studies can offer our students options. If the study of popular culture is a significant theme in a writing course, an effective way to launch student investigations is to present the methods and philosophies

other academics have brought to bear on popular topics. The comparison of political commitments and attitudes that mark cultural studies and popular culture studies presented in Chapter Three serves as an excellent starting point for getting students to think about why and how pop culture should be studied. This also places the politics of representative scholars, rather than the instructor's politics, at the center of class discussions.

Ideally, responsible pedagogies should respectfully present multiple positions on the issue at hand, encourage students to conduct honest, open-minded studies before forming their opinions and arguments, and then value their conclusions and evaluate their work based on its scholarly merit rather than its ideological leanings. There will inevitably be times when student writing makes competing claims on our ethical responsibilities, particularly if one student's position alienates or endangers others. The very principle of conjuncturalism demands that we take into account the multiple forces and factors at play in such situations and then act in what we perceive to be the most ethical and effective manner. Such situations also call on instructors to try to be open-minded and willing to consider arguments that challenge their own values.

Our curricula and classroom interactions should always be guided by a concern for our students' best interests.[21] In order to help students serve their own interests on the personal, academic, vocational, and political levels, we must help them understand the

[21] The debate over the extent to which educators are responsible for their students' ethical use of rhetorical instruction began with Plato and continues today. How should we respond when we know we are teaching students the skills that will help them promote ideologies and practices we oppose? I believe the answer lies in maintaining a distinction between our duties as educators and our obligations as citizens. Within the classroom, we should honestly try to remain neutral and rely on other students and texts to bring multiple arguments into the classroom. Outside of the classroom, however, I feel we have an obligation as citizens and public intellectuals to employ our own rhetorical skills to fight for the causes we support.

complexity of texts and the processes that create them. In another important taxonomy of composing, James E. Kinneavy argued that we must attend to all of the aims of discourse and prepare our students to understand and produce referential, expressive, literary, and persuasive texts. Kinneavy notes that "each aim of discourse has its own logic, its own kind of references, its own patterns of organization, and its own stylistic norms," and "it is to the good of each of the aims of discourse to be studied in conjunction with the others" (116). By systematically exploring a variety of popular and academic texts on the functional, relational, and conjunctural levels and asking students to produce texts in multiple genres based on related heuristics, we can meet all of the desired outcomes for first-year composition and help students master the rhetorical skills needed to reach their personal, professional, and civic goals.

Detailed Directions

Thus far, I have presented functional, relational, and conjunctural approaches to analysis and production in rather general terms in order to suggest the wide range of possibilities each level of concentration opens for classroom practice. This pedagogical paradigm is designed to be flexible and to encourage experimentation. One criticism of current scholarship in this area, however, is its tendency to present broad concepts without specific directions for application. The following sections present some of the issues involved with each category and provide illustrations from scholarship in the fields of popular culture studies, cultural studies, and composition studies, as well as examples from recent textbooks and descriptions of my own classroom practice. Throughout these

descriptions, I will discuss how each approach can meet specific educational outcomes and point to transitions between taxonomic categories and pedagogical practices.

In defining the educational outcomes pop-based pedagogies should meet, I turn to the Council of Writing Program Administrators' "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." The "Outcomes Statement," adopted in 2000, presents goals in several categories—rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes; and knowledge of conventions—and suggests skills students should have acquired by the end of first-year composition as well as how "faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation." My focus, likewise, is on first-year composition, but the functional, relational, and conjunctural approaches and examples discussed provide an adequate foundation for advanced composition classes as well as English courses dealing with a variety of traditional and popular texts.

By way of an initial illustration of each stage, we can return to Shelli B. Fowler's essay "Tracy Chapman in the Writing Classroom: Challenging Culturally Sanctioned Assumptions." As discussed in Chapter One, pop culture often entered English studies as a way to make literature more accessible or as a more "relevant" alternative to literary texts. While fewer introductory composition courses are now based in literature, many comp courses contain literary units and quite a few schools still design second semester or upper level composition courses around writing about literature. Popular texts can enliven and enrich these more traditional approaches, particularly when they are examined on multiple levels.

Fowler's essay nods toward the conjunctural level, but she takes a primarily functional approach to popular music in her writing about literature course. Fowler

introduces Tracy Chapman's 1988 song "Fast Car" for analysis and discussion in an effort to overcome her students' resistance to a queer critical reading of Samuel Johnson's 1746 poem "To Miss —— On Her Playing upon the Harpsichord in a Room Hung with Some Flower-pieces of Her Own Painting." Her functional approach stems from the recognition that students are more comfortable with contemporary popular music than they are with the archaic language and style of 18th century poetry; by treating songs as texts and showing similarities between the printed lyrics and poetic forms, Fowler helps students recognize their existing interpretive skills and overcome a general resistance to the explication of traditional poetry. Fowler guides a close formal reading of the text in the interest of teaching critical skills students will apply in their own writing. This is a common and useful functional integration of popular music in English courses at the secondary and post-secondary level.

Fowler claims that her students were better able to produce textual evidence to support a queer reading of "Fast Car" than they had been of Johnson's "To Miss ——" because they were "more comfortable" with the text itself, and they could then recognize the possibility of alternate gendered readings of other texts. This claim may be partially correct, and it supports the success of Fowler's pedagogy on the functional level. Several factors remain unstated in this discussion, however, which could be explored through relational and conjunctural approaches. On the relational level, for example, students might be asked to examine the extent to which their comfort or discomfort with these texts and theoretical stances depends on their personal experience and expectations pertaining to the content and genre of the works in question. While some would argue that a student's experience of domestic problems or preference for love songs over

epideictic poetry is irrelevant to an academic interpretation of texts, these factors are very relevant to the students themselves. Furthermore, foregrounding the personal element of rhetorical situations can help students gain a greater understanding of audience as they create their own texts.

On the conjunctural level, Chapman and her song would be approached in fuller context. For example, Fowler doesn't address the likelihood that her students are more comfortable with a queer reading of "Fast Car" because Tracy Chapman is a lesbian, while Samuel Johnson was a heterosexual male. In her discussion of culturally sanctioned assumptions, Fowler might also have discussed how students who did not know for a fact that Chapman is gay may have *assumed* that she is because at the time she sported a rather androgynous look, wearing no make-up and her hair in short dreadlocks. In addition, a more elaborate examination of the song's context reveals that none of the four love songs on Chapman's self-titled album assign a gender to the addressee, and several other songs deal directly with women's issues and female empowerment. Students could then be asked to explore their assumptions and cultural expectations regarding content from straight and gay writers. Teachers who wanted to address this issue today could discuss, for example, how several popular television series with primarily heterosexual characters and themes, such as *Sex and the City, Desperate Housewives, and Nip/Tuck*, are written by gay screenwriters (Poniewozik 56-58). Or they could ask students to compare and contrast how a variety of topics are depicted in GLBT publications and in the mainstream media and how these treatments reflect complex intersections of sexual orientation and other socio-economic identifiers and

illustrate how texts are shaped rhetorically in light of the locations of their production, distribution, and consumption.

Similarly, the Johnson and Chapman texts could be discussed in light of their socio-historical contexts. For example, students could be asked to trace the increasing acceptability of homosexuality in mainstream culture and media. One of Johnson's friends, dramatist Isaac Bickerstaffe, had to leave England and change his name because of a homosexual scandal in 1772 (Norton) and Oscar Wilde was incarcerated for sodomy in 1895, but by the late 1900s, Chapman sold 10 million copies of her sexually ambiguous record. Television shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Will & Grace* that openly celebrate or commodify homosexuality have been very popular in recent years, and several of the most talked about movies of the 2006 awards season, such as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Capote*, and *Transamerica*, offer thought-provoking treatments of gender and sexuality. This, of course, could lead to a discussion of the contradiction between the popularity of queer entertainment and the widespread opposition to gay and lesbian marriage and parenting rights.

Chapman's work presents other contradictions that could lead to fruitful conjunctural explorations. Students could consider how much money Elektra Records made from her album, which includes several songs that aggressively critique capitalism and decry the socio-economic marginalization of urban blacks. Or they could examine the Billboard Hot 100 songs list from 1988 and see how Chapman's feminist work in the folk singer-songwriter tradition was in company with "cock-rock" from Def Leppard and Poison and how her bleak view of contemporary life was countered by Bobby McFerrin's "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Students would likely find similar concerns and

contradictions in the current musical scene. These possibilities suggest the combination of topics, texts, and research methods that emerge when we consider all levels of textuality, and how one level of consideration leads naturally to the next. The following discussions include multiple examples, but they are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg because each local situation, each group of students, and each combination of texts opens an exponential number of avenues for exploration and textual production.

Functional

Functional approaches to popular culture have been the most obvious and comfortable inroads for instructors in English studies. Textual analysis is our forte, and it is therefore understandable for us to approach all of pop culture as texts to be read and critiqued. While Nelson, Blair, and other cultural studies proponents mentioned earlier have criticized English studies for its narrow focus on textuality, emphasizing the text and writing process is an essential element of composition pedagogy. Our challenge is not to move away from formal and functional integrations of popular culture but to expand and enrich them by examining the similarities and differences between traditional print and popular texts and genres, how these texts are consumed, and how they are produced.

Some integrations of pop culture in English courses have become quite standard. Bill Costanzo has written extensively about the use of cinematic adaptations in literature and writing classes. Shelli Fowler's assignment mentioned above is an example of using song lyrics as practice or aid to explicating poetry. Bruce McComiskey has written on the now common practice of employing advertisements to teach rhetorical analysis. The

textbook *Seeing & Writing 2* offers examples of functional approaches to popular and visual texts in "Visualizing Composition" features in each chapter. For example, students are prompted to practice close reading and notice details about a contemporary painting, examine structural patterns in photographs and descriptive patterns in personal ads, and read magazines advertisements for the functions of metaphor.

There are many variations on each theme, but the basic idea involves using a popular print or visual text by way of comparison, illustration, or substitution. These functional uses of popular culture can be quite effective because students often find the pop texts more engaging or "easier" to read than the traditional literary and essayistic forms they supplement or supplant. Thus functional approaches using pop texts can support acquisition of the rhetorical knowledge and skills in critical thinking, reading, and writing outlined in the "WPA Outcomes Statement." There are several potential weaknesses in lesson plans based on these models, however. One is the tendency for academics, particularly English teachers, to automatically privilege traditional print text and treat the popular as a bunny slope on the way to tackling the heights of artistic excellence. Also, it is important in composition courses that we highlight close reading in a rhetorical frame, rather than a literary model. Another danger is assuming an easy correspondence or transfer of critical skills between genres.

One factor in selecting and incorporating pop-culture texts is that instructors need to introduce the popular in a systematic and purposeful way. As Ellen Bishop explains of her film-based composition classes, the challenge "is to integrate film and writing rather than to use film simply as a supplement to writing. I want to hold film and composition in a useful and interesting relation with a certain amount of tension between them, to

integrate them rather than just use one in service to the other" (56). While it is useful to use readings or features of popular texts as analogies in engaging more traditional academic texts, we should also recognize them as worthwhile texts in their own right that fulfill distinct artistic, civic, and economic functions. The challenge rests in part in moving beyond English studies' natural tendency to privilege literary and essayistic texts. Some English instructors are highly suspicious of pop-culture texts because they are seen as detrimental to print literacy, but combining popular and traditional texts can actually have the opposite effect, as Bronwyn Williams argues regarding the use of television in writing instruction:

> Writing classes seldom acknowledge the power and legitimacy of the image. Are we anxious that if we did so we would devalue the power and legitimacy of the printed word? I have to think that, in fact, we would be doing just the opposite. If we acknowledge what students already know and feel—that images are powerful and offer us rich levels of information quickly—we can make a stronger case for the limitations of those same images and for the distinctive power of print: Print can offer depth, interiority, recursiveness, room for extensive reflection and analysis, and a sense of an individual writer's consciousness that is often not available in images. (81)

Our composition courses will be richer if we are willing, as Berlin suggests, to "turn our attention to 'textuality in all its forms'" (qtd. in Nelson 25). Combining popular and scholarly texts can offer rich possibilities for instruction in reading and writing.

Popular culture studies' attention to textual analysis can inform students' understanding of a variety of rhetorical features and conventional patterns. For example, in "With the Benefit of Hindsight: Popular Culture Criticism," Cawelti explains that interpretation, classification, and evaluation are key activities for popular culture critics, and he notes that popular culture studies has consistently been concerned with the concept of popular genres or formulas. Cawelti argues that "popular aestheticians have accepted the idea that conventionality is a necessary, perhaps even desirable characteristic of a truly popular art form," and "Once one accepts the validity of conventional forms . . . it becomes possible to recognize many different kinds of creativity and artistry within the limits of these conventions" (369). The "heuristic nature of generic constructs" discussed by Cawelti is highly applicable in the composition classroom.

I have noticed that first-year students, and particularly basic writers, often fail to distinguish between print genres and use terms like "essay," "story," and "poem," interchangeably. These students can often identify generic differences between comedies and dramas or sitcoms and reality shows more easily, and can list specific features of each. Therefore, it can be helpful to start from exercises in identifying genres in music or visual media; students aren't likely to think that a rap song is a country song or confuse television sitcoms with newscasts or commercials. Once students grasp the basic concept of genre, they can quickly move on to analyzing and replicating specific generic conventions in a variety of texts. Furthermore, once students understand how all writers have to work within certain constraints, they can begin to see opportunities for their own interests and creativity within the parameters of academic assignments.

To help students understand how to write evaluations, I often use movie reviews and music reviews as examples of how writers establish criteria and then offer specific textual evidence to illustrate how well a text meets these standards. In order to get my students more involved and spare them from my musical tastes, I ask volunteers to bring CDs and lyric sheets to class. We listen to the songs while reading the lyrics, and then discuss why students like or dislike the song. The discussion usually starts from genre as students note whether they like the type of music and whether it is a good example of the type. Students might ask questions about the artist, or compare the song with the musicians' previous albums or similar albums in the genre. Then we find published reviews of the same CD and discuss the similarities between our discussion and the generic conventions of music reviews.

In one particularly serendipitous class, two students brought in songs from related genres that dealt with the theme of fame and financial success in the music business. The first was a rap song by Paul Wall and Chamilllionaire done in the underground "chopped and screwed" style, which emphasizes remixing and technical effects. The other, by Trey Songz, was a more conventional hip-hop song. While few of the students recognized the first, most recognized the second and quite a few (especially the girls) began to sing along. The students were able to point to important differences in the conventions of musical style and language use and even recognized how the formal elements of these texts are influenced by audience and commercial considerations. Paul Wall and Chamillionaire target a more hard-core, masculine audience and emphasize their own rhetorical prowess and material possessions, while Trey Songz appeals to a more mainstream audience, especially the ladies, with a smoother song that highlights his

desire to provide for his girl. The student who brought in the first CD also noted that many artists now produce two versions of each album—one that will sell and get radio play, and another that allows them more freedom to chop and screw. Through discussion and reading professional reviews of the songs, we were able to see how different criteria change our evaluations. Some people judge hip-hop music on innovative language use in the lyrics, while others are more concerned with skillful rapping of the lyrics. Some emphasize an artist's technical production skills, while others are primarily concerned with the song's dance beat. In writing their own evaluations, I ask students to choose a specific forum and consider which evaluative criteria would be most important to that audience.

I probably could not have designed a more comprehensive discussion of genre, style, audience, and evaluation, and a text-book discussion of formal and functional elements likely would not have reached these particular students as successfully. Because I had never heard the songs before, I was able to share my "reading" process and how I make sense of new material. I also made it clear that I valued the role of the songs and the reviews as texts in themselves before introducing connections between these texts and the more academic texts I would ask them to produce. It was still a struggle for many students to evaluate specific textual elements in print, but this lesson helped them to recognize how all writers and artists work with specific generic conventions and gave us a point of reference for discussing the texts they examined as well as their own drafts. Furthermore, such pop-based lesson plans work toward meeting accepted outcomes for rhetorical knowledge by helping students "Understand how genres shape reading and

writing," asking them to "Write in several genres," and expanding their knowledge of conventions (WPA).

It is important to recognize, however, that while students may already have or quickly develop critical skills for reading popular texts, we cannot assume an easy transfer of skills from popular to traditional literacies. Using functional approaches to popular texts can help students develop their rhetorical skills and, as Williams notes, help them

> realize how much they understand about what we are saying about writing because they have experienced in the medium of [popular culture]. Of course, such analogies are simply a starting place . . . if we understand experience to be one of the key differences between how students respond to [pop-culture texts] and how they respond to print, we need to make them understand that expertise comes with experience and that one set of experiences can be a bridge to new and enriching experiences. (64)

Thus, functional approaches can value students' existing popular literacies and encourage students to value the rhetorical literacies of the academy. The key is that we need to include a variety of popular and academic texts and primary and secondary sources in our course designs and we need to make frequent, clear connections between the rhetorical situations and strategies at play in each type of text.

While many formal or functional approaches emphasize analysis of pop-culture products, examining the process of creating pop-culture texts can foster students' understanding of agency, conventions, and process in their own work. After hearing his students complain about the quality of television sitcoms, Williams gave them the

assignment of creating and describing a sitcom that would meet the conventions and constraints of network television and summarizing the first five episodes. The difficulty students had in accomplishing this goal helped them recognize both the explicit and implicit limitations faced by screen-writers and producers, and the process served as an illustration of how all writing—from history essays to historical dramas—is limited by conventions and expectations (84). Williams notes that this exercise also helps students see the mark of creators behind the scenes; "They are not accustomed to seeing the author's hand in the writing, to seeing the work as having been produced by a single sensibility and identifying how that sensibility has affected the piece" (85).

Ellen Bishop emphasizes the role directors and editors play in shaping films and making meaning in her film-based composition assignments. She then prompts students to apply this type of reading to their own texts, and the class discusses student essays

> in the terms we use to discuss the shot-by-shot analyses of the film openings. For example, I ask them to read the first paragraph, the traditional "topic sentence" paragraph, as an "establishing shot." Also, we discuss transitions from one paragraph to another in terms of cuts, and evidence in their arguments in terms of the visual images shown to the reader that support the narrative or plot. By applying this new and unfamiliar language and perspective to the "tired old issue" (as students often see it) of critique of their papers, I can make the work of revision more interesting and engaging. (66)

In real-world textual production, regardless of the medium, revision and editing are crucial elements of the creative process, not just hoops to jump through on the path to

correctness. The relatively recent technology of DVD special features can emphasize this point even more, as students can now watch a film accompanied by director and/or actor commentaries that reveal how they made their choices and what obstacles they faced. The 1998 DVD release of *Suicide Kings* was an early example of film-makers letting the audience in on their creative process. Director Peter O'Fallon shot five different endings for the film, tested three, and ultimately chose a darker ending than the romantic finale that was initially intended. The DVD includes the three tested endings, with voice-over from O'Fallon explaining how demographic response and maintaining an appropriate tone influenced his final decision. He also makes statements that are applicable to any rhetorical creation, noting how "films [texts] unfold as you make them" and that it is "the job of the director [author] to set the tone." Such examinations can help students meet outcomes pertaining to process by heightening their awareness "that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text" (WPA).

Of course, film, television, and music are almost always the product of multiple sensibilities interacting with one another and the constraints of the genre, economy, cultural climate, and other factors. This project could therefore serve as a useful illustration of the "collaborative and social aspects of writing processes" (WPA). The recent transparency in the film-making process challenges some traditional ways of reading film and offers new ways of talking about process. In "The Art of Collaboration in Popular Culture," M. Thomas Inge notes that the prominence of the "auteur" concept is the result of applying literary standards to filmic products, but that such standards fail to "accept film on its own terms" as a highly collaborative medium (33). Inge also argues that the privileging of individual artistic genius disregards the reality that "most of the

culture of this century, probably the nineteenth century, and possibly since the industrial revolution has largely been the product of the art of collaboration rather than the art of the individual" (32).

DVD commentaries can also serve as an introduction to more in-depth relational and contextual analysis. For example, O'Fallon indicates the complexity of audience response when he notes that the romantic alternative ending tested well with viewers over 25 while the darker ending tested more strongly with younger viewers; he concludes, "I think that has to do with tragedy in one's life. I think when you're young you don't have much tragedy and so you like dark stories." O'Fallon's use of focus groups illustrates the benefit of feedback during the composing and editing process, while his comments highlight the role of affect in our evaluation of pop texts as well as the importance of demographics and market factors in production.

Relational

In *The World is a Text*, Silverman and Rader present reading, thinking, and writing as "a kind of trinity of articulation and expression," combining logical and emotional elements. But they make the following suggestion: "In your initial semiotic analysis—your initial reading of a text—try to consider all aspects of a text before applying a label like 'good' or 'bad' (or interesting or boring). Such labels can only come after a thorough reading of the text in question" (6). In this somewhat idealized model of consumption, interpretation, and evaluation, semiotic analysis precedes affective judgments. As Williams has noted, however, viewers tend to respond to texts primarily and most consistently on the affective level. This is not surprising in an

information age that blends data overload with sensationalism and sentimentality. Students have so many choices and encounter so many stimuli that they rely on instinctive, affective filters based on comfort or excitement and fluctuate between preferences for the conventional and novel.

Laurie Cubbison concluded her WPA-L request for information about pop-culture pedagogy mentioned in the Introduction with the quip that she was "getting somewhat frustrated with 'They'll think it's cool' as a rationale for assignment design." While "coolness" alone is not a sufficient rationale for pop-based lesson plans, it is an important factor in the success of popular pedagogies. Just as students' first response to texts is most often affective, there is a significant affective component to students' responses to their academic classes and specific assignments. I would never suggest that teachers should design curricula solely or even primarily to entertain students and make themselves popular, but incorporating the popular in ways that respect students' tastes and emotional engagement with texts can foster positive attitudes toward the course and increase student engagement. One obstacle to tapping this positive energy is suspicion toward pop texts and students' affective responses to them, which are so often seen as shallow or misguided. According to Geoffrey Sirc, "the unwanted trash we vigilantly try to keep off our pedagogical streets turns out to be our most valuable natural resource—exuberance. Desire remains the key component lacking in most composition theory" ("Writing" 36). For many students, especially those who are uncomfortable with or suspicious of academic culture and content, establishing good will and enthusiasm is a significant first step toward instruction in academic literacy.

Exploring popular texts at the relational level can achieve several goals for composition pedagogy. When students examine and share their own reactions to texts, they engage in "writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating," and they gain a richer understanding of how to "respond to the needs of different audiences" (WPA). In particular, considerations of audiences' affective responses can inform discussions of ethos and pathos, which are often neglected in favor of logos in writing instruction. Students are used to thinking of themselves as consumers, but they aren't often encouraged to examine why they choose to consume particular texts or why they respond the way they do. Also, while students are avid consumers, they have often produced texts only within pedagogical contexts and rarely associate textual production with pleasure. Reading or viewing popular artists' discussions of their work can help students witness the joy of production, and they will likely have a greater affective attachment to their own texts if they write about popular content that evokes a strong emotional response.

Many of the essays by professional authors in the composition reader *Mirror on America* deal exclusively or primarily with the author's or audiences' affective involvement with popular culture and how producers of popular culture evoke and manipulate emotional responses. And while many of the activities and features in *Seeing and Writing 2* mentioned in Chapter Two focus on formal textual readings, most of the writing prompts involve some level of personal, often affective, response. After students are asked to identify structural elements in photos, for example, a sample assignment asks "Which of Testino's photographs do you like better? Write an informal essay in two parts: In the first part, carefully describe the figures in each photograph, what's in the

background, and the mood evoked by each; in the second part, try to articulate why you respond more positively to one than another" (309). This final move from initial emotional response to analysis of textual and contextual elements that evoke the response validates the affective reaction while locating it effectively within the framework of rhetorical instruction.

While many manifestations of the cultural studies project have been suspicious of affect for its role in allowing hegemonic forces to manipulate the masses, some theorists have carved a more positive role for senses and emotions. Indeed, cultural studies that emphasize lived experience can hardly deny the central location of affect in our textual encounters. Lisa Langstraat combines the theory and practice of cultural studies and composition in her argument that, "Making sense of, theorizing, the affective dimensions of lived experience must become the central locus of any cultural-studies composition course which emphasizes gender literacy—the capacity to identify and understand the ways in which gender is socially constructed within webs of power and difference in our culture" ("Gender" 4). Langstraat emphasizes the negotiation of ideological contradictions and affective investments by magazine audiences, but her argument could be extended beyond magazines and gender literacy to considerations of how a variety of popular texts operate in the construction and maintenance of any number of identities and assumptions.

However, Geoffrey Sirc critiques the academic tendency to eschew student's affective readings or subject them to expert critical readings. For example, in "The Difficult Politics of the Popular," he confesses that he did not like *Fight Club* and couldn't help deconstructing the film, but that he resists his own reading because his

students loved the film; "I resist my reading, then, because I like my students and I don't value them only to turn around and do a wholesale refiguring of their culture according to my preferred ideology (in the name of 'critical literacy')" ("Difficult" 424). One of the weaknesses of cultural studies-based courses is the imposition of particular readings through which instructors do not seek true inquiry but rather prod students toward preconceived identifications of what Sirc calls "the ideologically correct and the ideologically incorrect" ("Difficult" 428). In place of the "politically-correct formalism" of much current cultural-studies pedagogy, Sirc promotes a recovery of the expressive energies of "happenings composition" and pedagogies that promote creative, visceral experiences more than vocational goals (*English* 179).

Along with Sirc, Diane Railton seeks to rescue pop culture from scholars who say our engagement with music (or any popular medium) must extend beyond enjoyment and impose serious, critical standards that judge works on the basis of ideological location or political importance. Railton argues that we should not limit our studies to "transgressive" texts, nor should we assume that academic work on popular culture is "somehow inherently transgressive" (par. 1). Instead, if we "are to maintain a radical edge we must continue to push at the limits of the acceptable and bring into question how the boundaries of the acceptable are defined and justified. We need to be exploring the whole concept of cultural elites. It isn't radical to simply replace one elite with another" (par.7). Sirc echoes this sentiment: "I worry about a teacher who might use Eminem or Fight Club in class, only to perform a finely detailed, perfectly hermetic political reading that places under suspicion student pleasure . . . I worry that academic revulsion over the popular can become yet another reason to deny validity to noncanonical, possibly

transgressive materials" ("Difficult" 428). We can combine the two points to note that academia values transgressive texts, but only those which are appropriately transgressive, just as we value student resistance to certain hegemonic influences yet seek to overcome their resistance to our (inevitably political) pedagogical projects.

I agree with Sirc and Railton on the need to seek or recover desire, engagement, inclusiveness, and openness to truly radical readings in our studies of popular culture. But I would argue that we can and should make room for both transgressive and mainstream texts as well as affective and intellectual readings. Sirc, Railton, and others often suggest an either-or dichotomy of textual approaches, but engaging in multiple readings can help students see that responding emotionally and responding critically to texts are not antithetical activities. As William notes, academics are adept at moving between these positions, "But too often, the affective response, the empathetic and pleasurable connection with a piece of writing, is avoided or denied in writing classrooms. We can embrace pleasure without being anti-intellectual" (Williams 76).

Popular culture studies, especially in the early years, paved the way for scholars to engage with a wide variety of texts, from the sensational to the mundane, and for them to have fun in the process. I recently spoke with Caroline Hunt, an English professor at the College of Charleston, who attended some of the early PCA conferences. She recalled that some sessions offered pretty standard literary treatments of popular literature, but she also recalled a session about Mickey Mouse dishes. She said that some people had a hard time figuring out how such pop talks were "really academic," but that the participants all "had a great time" at those sessions. In the Preface to his *Perspectives* collection, popular culture studies pioneer M. Thomas Inge writes, "Sharing an

excitement of your own with students creates a rewarding environment, and discovering interesting things to research and write about can be the highest kind of pleasure" (qtd. in Dunne 128). Michael Dunne notes that this pleasure is evident in Inge's writing, and it is evident in the works of many popular culture scholars.

Often, however, instructors and students associate the affective level of composition only with the personal narratives and quests for authentic response and voice associated with the expressivist movement. I was initially drawn to relational approaches to popular culture in part as an alternative to the personal narratives assigned in so many composition courses. Following the old adage that students write best about what they know best, we have assigned students to write personal narratives that explain what they have learned from significant experiences. The result has been countless plot-driven narratives about game-winning touchdowns and the deaths of loved-ones, and rarely have the students' commentaries or discussions of significance gone beyond conclusions in the form of brief aphoristic or moralistic statements. I've been privy to enough copy room conversations to know that, while students take these life event stories very seriously, most instructors do not take this writing seriously and/or they find it very difficult to grade. Also, instructors rarely make connections between such personal writing and other genres that students will produce, so students are drilled on "showing, not telling" and writing entertaining stories with philosophical depth. These are valuable skills for fiction and creative non-fiction, but students may find it difficult to connect these lessons with the rhetorical situations they will encounter more often in their academic and professional lives.

In order to fulfill the need to appeal to students' lived experience and knowledge base without the perennially problematic personal narrative, I employ an essay assignment and sequence of activities in which students record their immediate responses to popular television shows, examine how their affective responses are shaped by their personal experiences and contexts, and share their responses and analyses with group members to gain a fuller understanding of possible responses to a text. To encourage a breadth of engaged responses, I ask the students to suggest and vote on appropriate shows, and we are generally able to watch episodes from several genres. With multiple texts, students are able to write their essays on the show they responded to most strongly, or alternately one that doesn't evoke an uncomfortable or overly personal reaction. Often, students choose to write about the episode that caused the most divergent responses among their peers because the essay assignment calls for them to explain why they respond to the text as they do and present why their response is valid based on their personal or cultural contexts.

These examinations call for an active engagement with television shows as texts and they often prompt students to investigate underlying contradictions and assumptions involved even in more casual viewing situations. For example, conservative Christian southerners have had to examine why they enjoy and "relate to" shows like *Friends* and *Will and Grace* that often celebrate liberal values and actions that these students find morally objectionable. Students have also noted that their viewing habits and reactions are shaped not only by their personal preferences, but also by those of peers and authority figures. Several students touched on this issue in response to *WWF: Raw is War*. On one hand, some students reported watching the show with friends and enthusiastically

discussed the cathartic role of wrestling's hyperbolic machismo and violence. On the other hand, they admitted that they might not tell other people (like teachers) how much they like wrestling for fear that enjoying such programs marks the viewer as a "moron" or "redneck." Because so many of these personal responses are influenced by cultural contexts, this assignment serves as a nice transition to conjunctural assignments that examine the multiple relations between texts and their broader contexts.

I also see the collaborative aspect of this lesson as important to students' recognition that the personal is also often cultural, and that sharing affective responses can build community. Such activities, in which students investigate the causes of their responses together, can challenge the cynical retreat to "everybody's entitled to their own opinion" and the fear of some academics that emphasizing individual reactions erodes connections to larger communities and cultural contexts. Dennis Hall articulates the fear that, "Atomized in a mass of mediated differences, culture will become a vast accumulation of single experiences, individual perceptions—the realm of aesthetics in the root sense of the term: *aesthetikos*, of sense perception" (27). This focus on individual perception collapses "the distinction between experience and analysis":

> Those who teach in the Humanities and Social Sciences are daily made aware of this cultural pressure, as they encounter students increasingly unwilling or unable to grasp the difference between, on the one hand, their personal feelings toward *Moby Dick*, Lyndon Johnson, Madonna, apartheid or Ross Perot and, on the other hand, an understanding of what each may mean for others, an understanding communicable to others. (27)

But this may be an overly apocalyptic prediction; many people use popular culture and technology to build community and establish (inter)networks and (world wide) webs of meaning through fan-sites, message boards, and weblogs. These pop-based and pop-influenced literacies can offer students even more examples of writing that is both emotionally and intellectually engaging, and they replace Hall's fragmentation and isolation with intersubjectivity.[22] Within cultural studies, "Intersubjectivity [is] the key mediating term between individual experiences and social structures," (Grossberg, *Bringing* 211) and thus, again, affective elements of communicative interaction bridge naturally to the critical elements of textual and contextual analysis.

Conjunctural

While the term may be unfamiliar, the concept of conjuncturalism is not new to composition. Berlin, for example, has discussed the conjunctural nature of his social constructionism: "Social epistemic rhetoric argues that the writing subject is a discursive construction, the subject serving as a point of conjuncture for a plethora of discourses—a rich variety of texts inscribed in the persona of the individual" ("Composition Studies" 108). Trimbur has also discussed the conjunctural location of composition pedagogy, explaining that "teaching writing takes place conjuncturally, in a history we are not free to determine, in concrete settings with all the particularities of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and age that students carry with them into the classroom, into the discursive

[22] In a sense, all communication is intersubjective in that it involves two or more individuals/subjectivities. Within cultural studies however, intersubjectivity evokes the specific psychoanalytic concept as well as more general discussions about the extent to which our consciousness and experience of the world is shaped by our interactions, textual or otherwise, with other subjects or social forces.

apparatus of schooling, its disciplines and technologies of power" ("Cultural"13-14). Yet while many instructors influenced by cultural studies recognize the complex, contextual character of the students, texts, and courses we teach, few have attempted to design conjunctural composition curricula.

This is due in part to practical limitations. Few textbooks go beyond rather basic considerations of context, and most discuss context primarily as one aspect of examining rhetorical situations. For composition curricula informed by cultural studies, this approach to context is not sufficient. As Grossberg explains, "Obviously, context is not merely background but the very conditions of possibility of something" (*Bringing* 255). Many interconnected factors shape every text and every reading of that text, and it is impossible to explore each factor, especially within the constraints of first-year composition. Some textbooks and curricula, however, do lend themselves more to conjunctural pedagogies. *The World Is a Text*, for example, includes essays that offer different perspectives on multiple media, and these collections can be read in conjunction and as a starting point for more extended conjunctural research, particularly as Silverman and Rader provide guidance for researching popular culture. For example, the "Reading Technology" unit explores connections between technology and race, gender, identity, politics, and globalization. It also asks students to trace the historical evolutions and possibilities of specific technologies, and to question why some technologies have not been pursued or adopted. By combining textbook treatments or, ideally, combining course texts with scholarly academic texts and primary popular texts, we can work toward conjunctural studies of course topics.

Just as one text is rarely sufficient for rich contextual analysis, a single assignment isn't capable reaching the conjunctural goals of cultural studies. One option for engaging topics more deeply is an assignment sequence in which each text produced examines a different contextual angle. If each assignment also emphasizes a different genre or audience, this approach can support multiple instructional outcomes. Another option is to have students collaborate in text- or issue-based working groups in which each member researches and writes about a specific aspect or context. The members then share their work or combine their writing into one long researched article. Such an approach highlights the collaborative nature of writing, fosters shared responsibility, and helps students "integrate their own ideas with those of others" (WPA). Either approach teaches important rhetorical skills and helps students understand the complex processes involved in academic research and writing.

Furthermore, conjunctural approaches invite research projects that allow students to emphasize their own interests and strengthen their own sense of agency. Because the form and function of any text is determined by a vast web of contextual forces, students can choose to follow threads that peak their personal interests or might serve their academic and professional interests. Grossberg explains:

> As a model of interpretation, postmodern conjuncturalism emphasizes its own articulation of the conjuncture it analyzes; it cannot ignore its own reflexive position within it. Consequently the voice of the critic becomes determining (e.g., the emergence of first-person ethnographies in which the researcher, as a member of the culture, becomes his or her own native informant). (*Bringing* 228)

Grossberg's example of ethnography points to cultural-studies methods beyond textual analysis than can open new research options for our students. While some research guides mention field work and student-driven data collection, most research projects in composition courses emphasize only the collection of expert readings and existing data.

At the conjunctural level, however, "the predominant modes of inquiry are ethnographic descriptions, 'textual' explications, field interviews, group surveys, and ideological and institutional analyses" (Leitch, "Birmingham" 75). Here again we can use examples from cultural studies and popular culture studies that negotiate the structuralist and/or culturalist approaches discussed in Chapter Three to enrich our students' understanding of academic research. In addition to opening up new fields of research, the strong authorial presence in most popular culture studies scholarship and an increasing amount of cultural studies scholarship can model different approaches to academic work, highlight the shaping hand of the author, and introduce issues of ethos and voice. Again, however, a course must be consciously designed to allow time for students to investigate and implement their research options and to establish their own sense of authority over the material.

While the complexity of these research projects makes them more appropriate for a second-semester or advanced research-based writing course, it is possible to introduce a big picture approach to context and pursue conjunctural goals on a smaller scale. For example, limited conjunctural approaches to popular culture can combine the critical project of cultural studies with the rhetorical and interdisciplinary literacies that often fall within composition's purview. In "Gods and Geneticists: Teaching *Gattaca* and Biotechnology in Composition," Michelle Sidler describes an assignment for a

biotechnology-themed composition course that "integrates film with scientific discourse and bioethics. The assignment highlights *Gattaca*, a science fiction film which introduces several major issues surrounding genetic testing and engineering while placing those scientific advancements in a cultural context." This assignment increases students' recognition that science (like all academic disciplines) is not disinterested; research and its application are influenced by a number of cultural, political, and economic factors, including public values and priorities, which are shaped in part by representations in popular culture.

These representations, however, are not simply imposed by some external power; they are reflective of society's attitudes, hopes, and fears. As Gary Edgerton notes:

> The aspect of the socio-cultural perspective that is most fully developed and apparent in the dialogue concerning popular culture and motion pictures is irrefutably the examination of how mass society and its many publics are portrayed, however indirectly, in the structure, products, and material conditions of the movie industry and culture. . . . The central assumption of popular culturalists in this line of film research is that movies and their surrounding institutional and industrial contexts are the products of a given time and civilization; moreover, motion picture content and culture mirror the concerns, beliefs, myths, fantasies, desires, fears, and aspirations of various social pluralities in both hidden and overt ways. It is, therefore, the goal of popular film critics to detect and reveal these literal and latent thought processes, ideologies, feelings, moods, and discourses with their respective theoretical views and methodologies. (49)

Douglas Kellner likewise suggests "that media culture provides social allegories which articulate class and social group fears, yearnings, and hopes. Decoding these social allegories thus provides a diagnostic critique with insight into the situation of individuals within various social classes and groups" (*Media Culture* 128). Far from a linear sender-message-receiver model, such approaches view texts and audience responses as threads in larger webs of meaning.

I have had considerable success in exploring the symbiotic relationship between cultural beliefs and popular representations through a writing unit based on several essays from a section on "Methods of Reading Race in the Film and Composition Classroom" in *Cinema-(to)-graphy: Film and Writing in Contemporary Composition Courses*. Following Donna Dunbar Odom's article on representations of student culture and another by Johanna Schmertz and Annette Trefzer about reading film multi-culturally and rhetorically, I begin this unit with a viewing and discussion of John Singleton's *Higher Learning* (though I plan to update this lesson using Paul Haggis's *Crash*). We discuss how specific elements of the narrative, casting, and mise-en-scène serve to present different ethnic and class groups. We then move beyond the formal analysis to discuss how certain contexts may have shaped the production and reception of the film (increasing cultural diversity on college campuses throughout the last decades of the 20th century; early '90s American pop culture, especially in light of the celebrity cast; Singleton's uneven body of films involving racial issues, from *Boyz in the Hood* to *Poetic Justice*) and how the film and its often stereotypical cultural representations might in turn shape cultural contexts and audience attitudes.

Singleton's rather heavy-handed presentation of multiple groups works well for introducing the rhetorical and cultural concepts of the unit and for practice analysis. I then ask students to conduct a similar viewing and analysis of a film of their choosing, its representation of a specific group, and the possible cultural contexts and consequences of this representation. While some students inevitably choose obvious films with stereotypical or "bad" representations that would clearly make people think poorly of the group in question, many students notice finer details and offer more sophisticated readings. Two examples from a first-semester composition course illustrate how students combined descriptions of specific details with reflections on the bigger cultural picture. Rather than focusing on negative representations of blacks in general terms, Nicole explained that *Jason's Lyric*

> demonstrates how African Americans are labeled as a race and how the race is divided among itself. The darker skinned blacks, like Joshua and Maddog, are thought of as heartless drunks who beat their own people and have no regard for life, not even their own. The lighter-skinned blacks are depicted as intelligent and self-motivated, as Jason and Lyric are. I find this film separates its characters on the basis of which side of the brown paper bag they are on.

This reading points to the fact that racial issues are not simply black and white and that, whether intentionally or not, even black directors often privilege whiteness.

Robert challenged the common perception of *GI Jane* as a positive representation of female empowerment, noting that Jane has to completely de-feminize herself in order to succeed (she works her body so hard that she ceases to menstruate and, after

succeeding in a difficult task, says "Suck my dick" to her Master Chief). He also read the film within the context of recent discussions about the "don't ask don't tell" policy and discrimination in the army. This unit on analysis of cultural representation of film continues the practice of formal and rhetorical reading skills developed at the functional level and highlights how close readings of film can help students "understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power" (WPA). Through their analyses of a variety of films, the students also uncovered a number of topics that could lead to extended conjunctural research projects.

Bruce McComiskey likewise provides several examples of assignments that work toward conjunctural goals in *Teaching Composition as a Social Process*. McComiskey provides his own "map of composition studies [that] represents three levels of composing: textual, rhetorical, and discursive" (6). In his pedagogical approach to popular texts like music and advertising, McComisky introduces another tripartite approach based on production, distribution and consumption. There are several similarities between McComiskey's map and the hermeneutic and heuristic framework I suggest, including his assertion that "a balanced approach to the three levels of composing leads students to the fullest and most effective understanding of their writing process. To that end, I believe that we need to make all three levels *overt* in our composition classes" (7). Just as Lawrence Grossberg has critiqued American cultural studies for reifying and simplifying Stuart Hall's model of circulation, McComiskey complains that most composition pedagogies based on cultural studies methodologies are similarly reductive. Instead, he emphasizes each moment in the production cycle, makes explicit connections between the analysis of texts and students' production of texts, and

suggests ways in which students can influence cultural production and their own living and working conditions through rhetorical intervention.

McComiskey explains, for example, that "In the postmodern age of mass production . . . the real work of production is the creation of desire in consumers for the potentially producible goods . . . Cultural production, then, is the creation of social values which manifest themselves in institutional practices and cultural artifacts" (*Teaching* 21). Therefore, he combines Berlin's heuristics for investigating semiotic codes with Trimbur's concern for student agency and adds elements of James Porter's forum analysis in order to create an assignment that calls on students to analyze the production of desire deployed through popular magazines. The students write critical essays to share their analyses, but then must also write practical letters to comment on problems or contradictions revealed in their critical essays and suggest possible solutions for specific audiences (*Teaching* 34-43). This progression from critique to intervention enacts cultural studies theory within sound composition practice and meets outcomes of producing texts in multiple genres tailored for specific audiences. Indeed, McComiskey almost always succeeds in offering balanced discussions of theoretical and practical issues, and his body of work presents the most consistent attempts at what could be called a conjunctural pedagogy that I have found.

Yet McComiskey's approach to textual and contextual analysis is based largely on an economic model that some current cultural studies theorists challenge as reductive. While the production cycle is without a doubt the most widespread basis for American cultural studies, Vincent Leitch argues that "scrutiny of interlocking but discrete processes of production, distribution, and consumption" should be undertaken within the

larger framework of "cultural circuits" ("Birmingham" 74). Leitch describes "the 'protocol of entanglement,' fundamental to all kinds of cultural criticisms, [which] is a methodological strategy that construes objects and phenomena always in relation to complex temporal and spatial contiguities and proximities" (75). The myriad factors that affect textual production and consumption cannot be accounted for by the strictly economic model, nor by the encoding-decoding model or structuralist and post-structuralist theories employed in some pop culture-based pedagogies. We need to consider what Grossberg identifies as the gaps "between productive interests, textual practices, and consumption effects" (*Dancing* 130). Even considering only the consumption end, Grossberg notes that there are "a complex series of overlapping sympathies and antagonisms. And we will find little help in preexisting sociological or political positions (e.g. the left-wing critic who, like so many fans, knew he had to hate Rambo but loved it 'once the shooting started' or all those who recognized how manipulative E.T was and yet still enjoyed it)" (*Dancing* 130). Grossberg and Leitch underscore the complexity of interactions between audiences and texts that makes the study of popular culture particularly fruitful for composition studies.

Pop-based Composition at the Crossroads

The textual connections and contradictions revealed in conjunctural approaches to composition are matters for cultural and political analysis, but they also recall the importance of affective responses and how these responses are triggered by textual features. While McComiskey's approaches emphasize rhetorical considerations within political and institutional contexts, they neglect the affective dimensions of

communication. The television response unit described above emphasizes relational approaches to texts, but only points toward relevant conjunctural readings. The model evaluations and stylistic critiques of rap music discussed in the section on functionalism touch on formal, affective, and contextual levels of engagement, but could easily be expanded into deeper considerations on each level as well as a variety of conjunctural angles. Although successful lesson plans can be based on any of these areas of concentration, the most effective and balanced composition pedagogies will employ all three approaches and a recognition that all aspects of composition and consumption are intricately linked, regardless of which level we choose to emphasize in a given lesson. Pop-based composition curricula should therefore be designed to guide students through each level of textual engagement.

For example, in "Film, Classical Rhetoric, and Visual Literacy," Colleen Tremonte describes a film-based freshman writing course that incorporates elements I would classify as functional, relational, and conjunctural. Tremonte explains that she began her class by asking students to compare thematic and structural elements in films and "to identify classical rhetorical appeals, to define the rhetorical situation, to locate images that function as metaphor and metonymy" (6). Tremonte's students quickly developed the ability to read films at this formal level, but were not engaging in the depth of critical analysis she hoped for, so she introduced a heuristic based on stasis theory from classical rhetoric. In providing more in-depth instruction in rhetorical concepts through film, Tremonte continued to employ a functional approach, but in asking students to examine the nature, definition, and quality of power relations represented in films (domestic containment in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, constructions of sexuality in

Some Like it Hot) she prompted them to explore texts at the relational and conjunctural levels as well.

The resulting student responses included affective responses to the films as well as increasingly insightful discussions of context; Tremonte notes that the students' writing also became clearer and made greater use of textual evidence throughout the semester. She concludes, "Stasis illustrates how interpretive strategies and literacies are never isolated and passive, but are rather social and dialectic. Stasis affords a way to question the production and consumption of discourse, the power of visual literacy, and, hopefully, the politics of culture" (15). Tremonte's article suggests some of the productive possibilities for popular culture in composition pedagogy and illustrates how combining functional, relational, and conjunctural approaches to popular texts can lead to more sophisticated student reading and writing. Unfortunately, such comprehensive treatments of popular culture in pedagogy have been the exception rather than the rule.

We need more pedagogical models that blend coherent theoretical discussions with concrete pedagogical descriptions to represent the instructional potential of informed integrations of popular culture in writing curricula. I am convinced that popular culture will become an increasingly important component of composition studies as media and technology increasingly shape our social, political, and rhetorical activities. If we want to make the most of popular culture in our composition courses in the future, we must look to composition studies' history, as well as to the related fields of cultural studies and popular culture studies, in order to avoid the pitfalls of past practice and reclaim the best content and methods these fields have to offer. My reading of these fields suggests that

the best approach to popular culture in composition is a systematic exploration of popular and academic texts on the functional, relational, and conjunctural levels.

This progression develops a more complicated understanding of textuality than most traditional integrations of popular texts, and also guides students in producing their own texts in multiple genres. This system also allows for a great deal of flexibility based on local situations and the evolving cultural scene. Our goal should be to continually experiment and extend our knowledge of best practices through publications, textbooks, and teacher training. Through our concerted efforts as scholars, educators, and writing program administrators, we can continue to map the most productive approaches to popular culture in composition and more successfully guide our students toward achieving their goals through writing.

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