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Translinguality and Disciplinary Reinvention

Bruce Horner, University of Louisville

Abstract: Dominant narratives of disciplinarity that WAC/WID confronts conflate disciplines with departments and material institutional structures, such as departments and professional organizations—what is here called “departmentality.” The relative autonomy of disciplinarity from departmentality means that challenges to foundational concepts of disciplines are in fact normal to disciplinary work and do not threaten the material institutional structures associated with those disciplines, as illustrated by the history of challenges to foundational disciplinary concepts of basic writing and second language acquisition carried out in disciplinary writing. The relative autonomy of disciplinarity enables us to accept the legitimacy of the challenges translingual theory poses to conventional notions of language, identity, writing, and their relations to one another circulating in composition studies generally and second language writing in particular as contributions rather than threats to the disciplinary work of these areas of study.

Composition is not . . . the same thing as the combined desires and practices of the members of the Conference on College Composition and Communication on any given day. It is not summed up in the journals, and it has an off-and-on-again relationship with the “key figures” in the field.

—David Bartholomae, “What Is Composition” (1996, p. 12)

The dominant narrative of disciplines is a story of the discovery of a puzzling phenomenon, followed by attempts to understand that phenomenon (research) and to apply the understandings that result. Reports on the findings and applications lead to further testing, leading to confirmation or revision and/or further elaboration of those findings and applications in a logical process leading to the discovery of Truth. That Truth, and the methods of its investigation and articulation (including dissemination), are what define a particular discipline. Hence academics identify themselves in terms of the phenomena they study—English Literature, Sociology, American History, Physics—which not coincidentally serve as the names for majors or minors—what students devote themselves to the study of as novice academics.

Such narratives, like all narratives, achieve their desired effect of a sense of wholeness by occluding various features of practice that suggest a more complicated and, it must be acknowledged, humble, even humiliating, reality—a counternarrative. First, as Bazerman (1992, pp. 62-63) has noted, there is far greater conflict and sheer messiness to the work of disciplinary research than are typically acknowledged in disciplines’ self-representations to outsiders and neophytes. Second, as Keller (1995) has observed, disciplinary study and concepts are more vulnerable to ideology and material social history than is typically acknowledged. And third, disciplines are, above all, material social practices: taking, and to be found only in, institutional structures, e.g., college and university departments, curricula, professional organizations and their paraphernalia of conferences and journal and book publications, and of course facilities such as laboratories and archives, and the grants and foundations that make particular kinds of study possible.

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In other words, disciplines can be understood more readily in terms of material social practices than in terms of free-floating bodies of knowledge or even areas of academic inquiry (such as “gender studies” or “microbiology”). More to the point, while, in dominant narratives, disciplines develop and then find or build a departmental “home”—as in departments of biology, math, English—it’s also the case that departments precede and give birth and defining shape and direction to disciplines. So, for example, while I might think of myself as someone working in a discipline called Composition, in fact I have always worked in and for departments of English, which gave birth to and define the shape, direction, and conditions of work “in” composition. Whatever I may think of myself, professionally I am defined above all, and especially by my students, as an “English teacher.”

This counter narrative is humiliating to those subscribing to the prevailing narrative in the sense that it reveals academic disciplinary work to be, in fact, labor, and academics to be laborers. There is of course a class interest in denying the materiality of academic work as labor, a denial that treats knowledge itself as im-material, and hence the members of the professional managerial class (PMC) as not engaging in material labor at all but, rather, in the disinterested discovery and dissemination of knowledge to the laity, for, of course, a fee: work, not labor, a profession, not an occupation. Indeed, we can account for the low academic institutional status of those of us working (laboring) in Composition as a consequence of the relative undeniability of the materiality of work in composition: working with student bodies (and not the most elite) and focusing on the practices by which knowledge takes material form: to wit, writing (Horner, 2000). That is, composition undeniably fits Marx’s definition of labor as “an activity which adapts material for some purpose or other” (Marx, 1979/1859, p. 36). While other disciplines also fit that definition, their fit is more easily deniable insofar as they keep teaching at a distinct remove and downplay the materiality of the labor requisite to the production of knowledge through writing (and researching). Among the challenges WAC/WID programs face is that of persuading faculty in disciplines other than Composition to acknowledge the importance of writing (and teaching) to knowledge production, rather than seeing it merely as a regrettably necessary component of its dissemination akin, say, to the need for more beakers.

This counter narrative of disciplinary work is, thus, humiliating to the degree that it forces us to acknowledge the material grounding of our work—*humility*, recall, derives from the Latin *humus*, or earth. The push to rename composition in terms of an object of study—as in “composition studies” or “writing studies”—can be understood as an attempt to avoid such humiliation. Against claims that composition lacks a content, and hence does not merit academic disciplinary status, such efforts produce a sense of disciplinary content knowledge, even if the content offered is qualified as at best a set of “threshold” concepts (see Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015). The “Writing About Writing” curriculum (Downs & Wardle, 2007) stands as one clear example of this strategy.

But as that push itself suggests, composition (the term I will use in place of composition studies, writing studies, or some multi-term combination such as “rhetoric and composition” or “composition, culture, and literacy”) lacks a credible narrative of itself as a discipline in the sense such narratives provide. Instead, as a matter of historical record, composition as a “field” arose as an institutional strategy to address institutional needs: most prominently, how to ride herd on students who in one way or another did not appear to fit with, or to be fit for, what US colleges and universities expected or wanted (except for tuition) (Bartholomae, 1996, p. 11). The fact that fields of study comparable to composition have not emerged outside the US, at least not in the forms taken by composition, illustrates the historically institutionally specific character of composition. (This is not to say that there is no interest in studying writing or its teaching elsewhere but to highlight that the forms that interest has taken vary in relation to the sociohistorically, institutionally specific conditions obtaining elsewhere.)

So far so bad. Or so it might seem, at least for disciplines, or subdisciplines, such as Composition, Second Language Writing, WAC/WID, Basic Writing, etc. that appear to be so undeniably, irrevocably tied (chained?) to the vagaries of institutional needs and material labor, most obviously the labor of

(undergraduate) teaching and writing. WAC/WID, for example, would appear to lack a disciplinary identity of its own, and even to abjure by definition the accoutrements of disciplinarity in claiming either to work across the material manifestations of disciplines (writing “across” the curriculum) or to be applicable to any and all disciplines (“writing” in each and every one).

I’ve written elsewhere (Horner, 2014, 2016) that there is hope in the very “lowness” of the position of Composition vis-à-vis other academic professional disciplines. Here I’ll argue that the disconnect between disciplinarity and the institutional material social vagaries I’ll call “departmentality”—e.g., departments, curricula—provides a space for productive work to continue, no matter how that work is defined disciplinarily. In this sense, the counter narratives in which Composition and its related disciplinary subfields, including Basic Writing, Second Language Writing, and WAC/WID—appear to be doomed to play leading roles also offer hope that seemingly radical changes in disciplinary understandings, while they might change disciplinary self-definitions, need not, and in fact should not, pose threats to disciplinary work. Rather, for worse and better, there is a degree of relative autonomy for both disciplinarity and departmentality. I use the specific example of the history of Basic Writing (BW) as both an institutional designation and an area of disciplinary expertise to illustrate the consequences, and more importantly the lack of direct consequences, of disciplinary developments for the departmentality of work identified by disciplinary affiliation. This in turn has implications for the relationship between what we mean by writing “in” the disciplines and the work of (teaching) writing across the curriculum, and for conceptions of disciplinarity, and structures of departmentality, that would appear to be at odds with the work and efforts of WAC/WID: disciplinary commitments can run roughshod over departmental mandates, but, conversely, departmental structures can make possible what disciplinarity deems beyond the pale.

My consideration of the relationship between disciplinarity and departmentality responds most immediately to the hoped for and feared effects on the disciplinary areas of Composition and Second Language Writing (SLW) of work identified with the term *translinguality* (Atkinson et al., 2015; Canagarajah, 2013; Matsuda, 2014): the possibility that translinguality might issue an entirely new set of practices for the study of writing and dissolve the divisions between Composition and SLW, but with the possible consequence of erasing hard-earned gains by those working within each of these areas, particularly SLW, and neglect the needs of students (falling within either SLW or F[irst] L[anguage] W[riting]). There is a growing body of disciplinary work, some of it associated with the term *translinguality*, challenging such concepts as “second language,” “native speaker,” “language competence,” as well as notions of discrete and stable languages. Significantly, much of this work is affiliated with disciplines other than composition: among them, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, cross-cultural studies, language education, linguistic anthropology, and literary study (Blommaert, 2010; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Gramling, 2016; Leung et al., 1997; Liu, 1995; Milroy, 2001; Modern Language Association, 2007; Pennycook, 2010; Yildiz, 2012—see Horner et al., 2011, pp. 316-21). Put broadly, this work calls into radical question the tenets of a language ideology of monolingualism. These tenets include the conception of languages as stable, discrete, internally uniform, and linked indelibly to users’ likewise stable, discrete, internally uniform, and singular civic and ethnic identities, and of multilingualism as a matter of simply adding more such individual, discrete, languages and identities—what Grosjean (1989) has called the myth of the bilingual as simply “two monolinguals in one person” model.

A range of neologisms (of which *translingualism* is only one) has emerged to name the alternative to that language ideology of monolingualism: *plurilingualism*, *transcultural literacy*, *diversalité/créolité*, *translanguaging*, *code-meshing*, *metrolingualism*, *cosmopolitan English*, and *transliteracy* (Council of Europe, 2001; Lu, 2009; Bernabé, Chamoiseau, & Confiant, 1989; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009; You, 2016; Young and Martinez, 2011; Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015; Zarate et al., 2008; cf. Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012, p. 656.). While there are significant differences in what each of these terms means, for my purposes here I’ll focus on their alignment on six key points. First, they signal the presence of more than

one language as the norm of communicative situations. Second, they signal the fluidity of the defining identities and relations among these languages. Third, they position language use as entailing the mixing and changing of different languages, and, fourth, and relatedly, they grant agency to language users to do so, rather than seeing such mixing and changing as evidence of linguistic failure, incompetence, or threat. Fifth, they posit the identities of not only individual languages but also individual language users as fluid. Finally, they locate language not outside material social history but in material social practices as the always emerging outcome of language practices rather than the universals against which language practices are to be measured (see Canagarajah, 2015).

Many compositionists have accepted the validity of such tenets of languages, language relations, language users, contexts of use, and the relations among all these, perhaps above all because these tenets comport with teachers' experience in their classrooms: the myth of linguistic homogeneity that Matsuda (2006) identified is increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of the linguistic heterogeneity teachers and their students experience in their classrooms (Hall, 2014; Gallagher and Noonan, 2017; Zawacki and Cox, 2014). Nonetheless, and paradoxically, it's also manifestly evident that in our daily lives and work as teachers and scholars of language and literacy, we proceed as if, instead, monolingualist tenets hold sway. Commonly, for example, writing programs make a distinction between courses for native and for non-native speakers of English, despite the problems of these labels, and writing courses and programs are almost universally housed in departments of English rather than, say, modern languages. Likewise, WAC/WID programs that address language difference as the statistical norm are themselves exceptions to the norm of WAC/WID programs. In other words, whatever the language ideology that we might consciously pledge our professional allegiance to, we face the obdurate social reality of monolingualism as a force that continues to shape our lives and our work in institutions in profound, seemingly incorrigible ways. As Jan Blommaert observes, "[T]he sociolinguistic system in which we situate academic literacies is increasingly *polycentric* but dominated by a *monocentric* hegemony, which rather than supporting and facilitating the development of the system acquires the major function of policing and disciplining the system" (Blommaert & Horner, 2017, p. 14; cf. Pennycook, 2017, pp. 134-37). In short, as Yasemin Yildiz (2012) explains, we live not in a translingual, plurilingual, or monolingual but a post-monolingual world in which the power of monolingualism continues to hold sway. This is true because, as a language ideology, monolingualism inheres not merely in our conscious beliefs but in the structure of social institutions, including the institution of languages, and deeply in our habitus.

But to acknowledge the continuing sway of monolingualism does not constitute allegiance to monolingualism. Rather, to do so is simply a useful point of departure for our work under postmonolingual conditions. The history of Basic Writing illustrates what such work entails. Basic Writing arose in response to institutional mandates, and, as Mary Soliday (2002) has demonstrated, its prehistory (i.e., remedial college writing instruction) is one of repeated shifts in response to the vagaries of institutional needs: for prestige, for generating FTEs, for shifting faculty focus to and from research, etc. The official disciplinary narrative of Basic Writing, at least initially, was one of the sudden appearance of an alien species, the Basic Writers, whom teachers and scholars attempted to make sense of through research, leading to theories and concepts to name and explain the differences between Basic Writers and "normal" students (e.g., cognitive egocentrism, cultural conflict, oral mindsets), leading to the development of specialized programs by research specialists to apply the findings of this research.

But there is a more persuasive counter narrative. Here, for example, is how David Bartholomae (1987) put it:

As a profession, we have defined basic writing . . . by looking at the writing that emerges in basic writing courses. We begin, that is, with what we have been given, and our definition is predetermined by a prior distinction, by a reflex action to sort students into two groups (group that look "natural" or "right"). *It is not driven by conscious theory or by any prior analysis* of the

nature and development of that species of advanced literacy represented by textual studies in the academy. We know who basic writers are, in other words, because they are the students in classes we label “Basic Writing.” (p. 112, emphasis added)

In this story, then, research does not lead to courses; instead, courses, and the students in them, lead to research: “[w]e begin, that is, with what we have been given.” Disciplinarity, as represented by the “field” of Basic Writing [sic] (and this is factually, historically accurate) follows from departmentality: the designation of (some) courses and students as “basic.”

Those familiar with the subsequent history of Basic Writing as a project—courses, programs, studies, and specialists in teaching and carrying out studies in basic writing—will recall that not much later, Bartholomae and others questioned the legitimacy of specialized courses in Basic Writing for students labeled Basic Writers, arguing instead for developing strategies by which to “mainstream” those students (Adams, 1993; Bartholomae, 1993; Glau, 1996; Gleason and Soliday, 1997; Rodby & Fox, 2000; McNenny & Fitzgerald, 2001; Shor, 1997). That is, their research into what they had been given led these teacherscholars to at least call into question, from a disciplinary perspective, the legitimacy of the institutional practice designating some students and courses as basic, and to propose and design alternative curricular practices (I myself, along with my colleagues, participated in aligned efforts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee). Those persuaded of the dominant narrative of disciplines would be inclined, then, to think that this disciplinary challenge to the legitimacy of basic writing courses would have led to the dissolution of Basic Writing as a field of inquiry.

But that is not what has happened. Nor is that field of inquiry now restricted to those who refuse to accept the findings of those advocating “mainstreaming” of students who might otherwise be tracked into “basic writing” courses. Instead, the field of inquiry known as Basic Writing continues apace, as demonstrated by the usual disciplinary paraphernalia: conferences, a “Council on Basic Writing,” the *Journal of Basic Writing*, a listserv, and so on. In other words, despite the movement to “mainstream” basic writing students and courses, the discipline of Basic Writing continues undeterred and, if anything, enlivened by the challenges to the legitimacy of Basic Writing as a designation for particular groups of courses and students. While debates about basic writing continue (inevitable given the strategic character of the designation), the commitment to students and their writing, and to better understanding these, that the material infrastructure of this field of inquiry supports, remains (Horner, 2012). It is possible, in other words, to support the disciplinary study of basic writing while questioning the legitimacy of *basic writing* as a designation for students, their writing, and courses for these. David Bartholomae and Peter Dow Adams, for example, both of whom challenged the legitimacy of separate basic writing courses, were among those signing the 2011 resolution approved unanimously by the Conference on College Composition and Communication that “Basic Writing is a vital field and its students and teacher scholars a productive force within composition” (Council on Basic Writing, 2011).

There is a productive gap, in other words, between Basic Writing as a “vital field,” on the one hand, and specific institutional curricular practices, such as courses in “basic writing,” on the other, that need not, and perhaps can never be, closed. The assumption that they must be coterminous rather than disparate is a manifestation of the conflation of disciplines with departments (or programs), when, as I have been arguing, the two may well have no more than a glancing relationship with one another. This is not to argue against attempts to change institutional practices, such as teaching and curricular design, in light of disciplinary research. But it is to acknowledge that knowledge mobilization, here represented by the “application” of disciplinary knowledge, inevitably entails its continual transformation (Ellis & McNicholl, 2015; Fenwick & Farrell, 2012), and that such mobilization requires the friction of resistance arising from material constraints. Indeed, much of the published scholarship in Composition broadly and in Basic Writing, Second Language Writing, and WAC/WID in particular is manifestly the result of the friction of agency and structure colliding in what Giddens (1979) calls the process of structuration.

The apparent lack of effect on the disciplinary field of Basic Writing of its undermining of the institutional designation “basic writing” suggests that anxieties over the effect of disciplinary challenges to monolingualism on the fields of Second Language Writing and Composition more broadly are misplaced. The disconnect between disciplinarity and departmentality is evident in the contributions to a symposium published in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* in which scholars responded to an invitation to describe what SLW [sic] meant to them in order, as Atkinson (2013, p. 425) put it, to “stimulate new thinking about ‘who we are,’ as well as provide an historical snapshot, to some extent, of the current state of the field.” In his symposium contribution, Canagarajah (2013, p. 441) argued that changing conceptions of writing and its relationship to language lead to the necessity to “ask if there is any benefit in keeping alive the discipline ‘second language writing,’” warning that those same changing conceptions may mean that

Soon, our Other—“first language writing”—won’t be around, and we’ll be left with the ghostly presence of a “second language writing” that may not have much practical value. More importantly, when “second language” instructors have an opportunity to move to the center of writing studies and contribute to a richer understanding of writing for all students, responding to the move by “first language” teachers and researchers, they might instead ghettoize themselves. When certain concepts have served their usefulness, they are abandoned and new concepts constructed to reflect our new realizations and pedagogies. That is after all the logic behind the rise and fall of intellectual paradigms, as described by Thomas Kuhn.

Canagarajah is not calling for the “end of second language writing” but posing a question about its future in light of conceptual changes (his title ends with a question mark). But the hypothetical “end” to second language writing he poses would be a realization of the logic of the dominant narrative of academic disciplines, by which institutional structures are the consequence of disciplinary concepts. By that logic, when particular concepts are no longer accepted—for example, the distinction between first and second languages, now quite rightly in serious dispute, as Canagarajah observes—the institutional structures expressing them will, or should, disappear. This is the same logic leading at least some in “Basic Writing” to have feared that challenges to the legitimacy of the conceptual designation *basic writing* would lead to the field’s demise (see, for example, Greenberg, 1993). But institutions are full of ghosts—the perduring presence of makeshift structures with only a modicum of relationship to past and current disciplinary thinking. Departments of English, for example, remain an institutional force to be reckoned with at most US colleges and universities despite the fact that foundational disciplinary conceptions of English (as a literature and language and field of study) have long been under siege, and despite the fact that what is taught and studied by those (students and teachers) “in” English often bears only the slightest of relationships to what we might think of as belonging strictly to the purview of English *per se*, e.g., “creative” writing, fashion, film, mythology, cultural studies, critical theory (Carter, 2016; Ellis, Fox, & Street, 2007). It stands to reason, then, that the *institution* of Second Language Writing is itself highly likely to outlive radical challenges to what might seem like concepts foundational to the *discipline* of Second Language Writing, including “language,” “writing,” “second language,” and “second language writing.” In fact, as Atkinson (2013, p. 425) observes in his introduction to the symposium, “open discussion and debate are necessary for us to have a healthy and dynamic field.”

In this regard, it’s telling that none of the other contributors to the symposium directly defends the concepts that Canagarajah rightly notes are now under radical challenge (the discrete character of languages; uniform, stable, and linear notions of language competence; the monomodality of writing; and the definition of “first language writing” against which the designation “second language writing” would appear to define itself).¹ Instead, contributors express concerns about expanding the “who” of L2 writing (Belcher, 2013), advocate for students and teachers in terms of “who,” “where,” and “how” (Ferris, 2013), explore ways to achieve greater congruity between research and teaching practice in ways sensitive to local

contexts (Lee, 2013), and encourage the support SLW offers for second language acquisition (Zhang, 2013). Several contributors (Hyland, 2013; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2013; Kubota 2013) echo Canagarajah's (2013) rehearsal of disciplinary challenges to the conceptual (and practical) divides between L2 and L1 writers.

Matsuda (2013), in his response to the symposium, notes that second language writing is and always has been "transdisciplinary," explaining that the field is "issue driven, rather than theory or method driven" (2013, p. 448). But I take this as a polite way of saying that SLW, like FLW (first language writing, a.k.a. "composition") is driven to poach from whatever might seem promising in whatever disciplines, in attempts to address institutional exigencies (see Lu, 1999). But, as Matsuda (2013) rightly points out, SLW has now established the material infrastructure to maintain its disciplinary work, however transdisciplinary the efforts of its teacher-scholars to address the issues they face. Given that infrastructure, and the issue-driven nature of SLW work, it seems likely that in the long meanwhile of the post-monolingual conditions currently obtaining, Second Language Writing (like Composition) will continue, just as "English Studies" has persisted despite radical challenges to its conceptual underpinnings.² As Firth and Wagner (2007, p. 803) observe of their own (1997) "meta-theoretical" critique of foundational concepts of mainstream SLA, "in and through [Firth and Wagner's] critique [they] both aid in [SLA's] construction as mainstream and contribute to its status as mainstream." Debate is what disciplines do.

This is not to say that there is no effect, and hence no use, to engaging in such debate. Challenges to foundational concepts in "teaching subjects" like WAC/WID, composition and second language writing can and do have effects on teaching practice, albeit often in unintended and unanticipated ways. For example, growing numbers of teachers across the disciplines are using assigned writing as a means of enhancing student learning rather than only as a means by which students demonstrate acquired knowledge. And challenges to basic writing and assessment practices have led to significantly altered curricula for students who would have previously been placed into non-credit bearing basic writing courses on the basis of multiple-choice grammar tests. Conversely, teaching changes foundational concepts, as illustrated by the ways that teachers' experience of teaching "basic writing" led them to radically challenge dominant notions of writing and writing development (Shaughnessy, 1980).

But the relationship between disciplinarity and departmentality is tenuous, one that is continuously being reinvented, even when that reinvention appears simply to sediment more of the same, just as disciplines and departments are themselves necessarily subject to continual reinvention, as Firth and Wagner's statement (2007) cited above attests. This does not mean that disciplinary work is free of material bonds, part of a superstructure untethered from any material base. Quite the contrary. But those bonds, or rather the means of its work, include material resources different than departmentality alone provides: the infrastructure of journals, book series, conferences, listservs, professional organizations, and writing itself. Hence the frequent disconnect between departmental work, on the one hand, and disciplinary work, on the other.

The space of that disconnect provides room for reinventive work such as the challenges Canagarajah identifies second language writing facing, those Firth and Wagner have posed to SLA, those Bartholomae and others offered to basic writing. But note that that same space of disconnect precludes any direct, determining consequences for such reinventive work. So it is not just possible but likely that the disciplinary field of Second Language Writing will accept the challenges to second language writing Canagarajah has identified and yet remain the field of Second Language Writing, just as, for much of its history, the disciplinary field known as "College Composition and Communication" (represented by its flagship journal of the same name) has until recently largely ignored communication (see George & Trimbur, 1999) while keeping the term. The material infrastructure of disciplinary fields is merely the site where (and the means by which) their reinvention "takes place," producing a sense of continuity, or sameness, in what is also undergoing perpetual reinvention, even in reiteration. (Place, Cresswell [2002]

reminds us, is best thought of as an event.) More to the point, reinvention is not erasure. We contribute to disciplinary sedimentation even in our efforts at disciplinary reinvention—again, as Firth and Wagner attest.

I have argued that contrary to dominant narratives of disciplinarity, disciplines are in a state of perpetual reinvention, they have a tenuous relation to departments, and they are best understood as material social practices. What we might think of as the “transdisciplinary” character of work in fields such as FLW (first language writing), SLW, BW, and WAC/WID is a consequence of the effect of departmentality on disciplinarity—what Matsuda (2013), in reference to SLW, calls its “issue-driven” nature. While this does not undermine the value of thinking of writing—whether SLW, FLW, WID/WAC, or BW—in transdisciplinary ways, it gives a different valence to the practice of transdisciplinarity in these fields than is ascribed to transdisciplinarity as practiced under other, more officially “disciplinary” conditions—e.g., Karen Barad’s (2007) blend of quantum mechanics, feminism, and philosophy. Not all transdisciplinarity is equal in status, or the same.

I would suggest, then, that the anxieties over the effects of translingual theory on the relationship between FLW and SLW arise not out of disciplinary disputes, as these are conventionally understood, but, rather, out of institutional disputes—what I have been calling “departmentality”—hence the lack of debate, and if anything evidence of consensus, in the JSLW symposium on SLW about the validity of the challenges to foundational concepts of SLW (and, of course, FLW) that Canagarajah (2013) outlines in his own contribution to that symposium. But, hence, the likelihood that, in the long meanwhile of these post-monolingual times, the institutional infrastructures of SLW and FLW will remain irrespective of such disciplinary challenges, in part insofar as they provide a space for those challenges to be pursued. CCC will remain CCC, JSLW JSLW, JBW JBW, ATD ATD, however differently we understand writing and its relationship to language(s) and disciplines.

Underlying this argument is the argument that translinguality is fundamentally, and only, a disciplinary challenge: it calls into questions dominant conceptualizations of language, language relations, language users, contexts of use, and the relations among all these in a range of fields, FLW, SLW, BW, and WAC/WID included. Its challenge does have implications for the teaching of writing in all these areas, albeit not necessarily those that either its ostensible advocates hope for or its opponents fear (Guerra, 2016; Horner, 2017; Lu & Horner, 2013). But it does not threaten the institutional infrastructures of any of these. Instead, it calls on us to reinvent the work we do with them, the work that we put such structures to, and to see such work as normal, rather than deviation or threat. Translingual theory intersects and overlaps with SLW, leading to misleading conflation between the two, insofar as both translingual theory and SLW bring language to the fore as a key site for exploration in the teaching of writing (vs. approaches that operate within a monolingualist framework) in the same way that modality has also recently come to the fore as a key site for exploration in all areas of the teaching of writing (my colleagues and I explore the overlaps between these in Horner, Selfe, & Lockridge, 2015).

For those of us working in WAC/WID programs, translinguality should be understood as posing challenges to how we understand writing and its teaching and learning, rather than to how WAC/WID programs are structured. If translinguality threatens business as usual, it does so from within (productively) by making us rethink the relationship between language, writing, writers, and the contexts of writing and posing all these as always emergent and co-constitutive, located in practices. For WID in particular, disciplines can be understood as themselves always emergent, subject to and in need of continual reworking by writers—including student writers—who do not so much write “in” disciplines as they write, and rewrite, disciplines, which are the always emerging outcome of writing practices. T was ever thus (Monroe, 2002). Pedagogically, this has the advantage of granting greater agency and, importantly, responsibility to writers (including student writers) for the reproduction and revision of disciplines through their writing practices. This shows writing to be more exciting, and dangerous, than we might ordinarily expect, and hence merit all the more attention in our teaching and research.

But this disciplinary challenge—a challenge both to how we understand the ordinary work of WID/WAC and to the ontology of disciplinarity itself—has at best a glancing relationship to the material institutional infrastructure of WID/WAC, whether in the sense of the infrastructure supporting such programs at specific institutions, or in the sense of infrastructure supporting the study of writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum as a disciplinary area of inquiry (e.g., as represented by the journal you are reading). If anything, the challenge, as it takes material form in journal articles like this one, serves to further the sedimentation of that infrastructure, and the disciplinarity of WID/WAC, through its articulation. Hence, it is something to embrace even by those who might be inclined to reject specific claims constituting that challenge.

In the epitaph opening this essay, David Bartholomae argues against conflating composition—the discipline—with composition *tout court*. This is not to deny the disciplinary work of composition as part of composition, but to recognize that the relationship between the professional disciplinary work of composition and composition is sketchy. As he warns, composition is

not in the control of composition professionals; it is not represented by the conflicts that take place at meetings or in journals; it is, rather, a set of problems produced by a wider, more diffuse set of practices and desires, usually brought into play by instances of language change or variety.... In a sense, the history of composition has been the record of institutional and professional responses to challenged standards, challenges to a standard of writing produced by writers who were said to be unprepared. Composition marked the people and places charged to prepare those students and/or to defend and rationalize their “unauthorized” writing. (1996, p. 11, emphasis added)

Acknowledgements like Bartholomae’s are usually taken as reasons for despair, or at least discouragement: we (composition professionals) are not in control of what we do or what is said about we do—we do not even represent composition (or in any case are not generally recognized as doing so). But as I have argued, the gap between disciplinary work and the work that goes on under cover, in the daily practices and structures of institutions, can be not only a source of shame or regret, but also a space for possibility. Lack of control over one’s discipline, that is, may be not so much a failing to be regretted as a saving grace. In our work with writing, in and on the disciplines, among and across curricula, as well as in courses in writing *per se*, whether marked SLW, FLW, BW, or in some other way, we can draw on that grace, which allows us to join our students in the daily work of reinventing writing, learning, disciplinarity and their relations to one another.

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Notes

1. Canagarajah cites work by my colleagues and me (Horner et al., 2011) challenging “first language writing.”
2. As Matsuda (2003, pp. 28-29) observes in an earlier text, the field of second language writing should be seen as “a symbiotic field” that “can and should continue to provide a discourse community in which specialists from various related fields can come together to discuss common issues and concerns—the nature of second language writing and writing instruction in various institutional contexts—and to negotiate differences in theoretical, ideological, and methodological perspectives.”

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