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"To Tell Afterward": The Stories of Five Scholars in Composition-Rhetoric

Kelli Lynn Custer

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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“TO TELL AFTERWARD”:
THE STORIES OF FIVE SCHOLARS IN COMPOSITION-RHETORIC

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Kelli Lynn Custer

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2010

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Kelli Lynn Custer

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Signature on File

Claude Mark Hurlbert, D.A.
Professor of English, Advisor

Signature on File

David I. Hanauer, Ph.D.
Professor of English

Signature on File

David B. Downing, Ph.D.
Professor of English

ACCEPTED

Signature on File

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
The School of Graduate Studies and Research

ABSTRACT

Title: “To Tell Afterward”: The Stories of Five Scholars in Composition-Rhetoric

Author: Kelli Lynn Custer

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Claude Mark Hurlbert

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. David I. Hanauer

Dr. David B. Downing

New members of an academic discipline often look to leaders of the field to help them determine possible routes for achieving success in that field. Composition-rhetoric developed as a field partly through forging numerous connections to other disciplines, thus leaving the field particularly capacious and, therefore, including more possible routes for a scholar to find her own professional success within the field. In this study, I present profiles of five leaders in composition-rhetoric: Don McQuade, Anne Ruggles Gere, Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and Nell Ann Pickett. Following a selected review of each participant’s literature, I present narrative accounts of personal interviews that I conducted at homes or home institutions. An exploration of these stories reveals that each participant was strongly influenced by their upbringing and made purposeful decisions about their careers; however, the way they responded to unexpected opportunities and difficulties is the clearest indicator of how they found success in ways that are important to them. For compositionists at all stages of their careers, an understanding of these leaders reveals that the “map” one might follow toward

a desired personal and professional place in the field is determined less by a particular route than by an individual's ability to respond to the unexpected in fruitful ways.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most writers will say that writing is a lonely business, and in many ways, that is true, but this writing has also led me to a profound gratitude for the many people in my life who kept me company along the route of my dissertation.

First, my deepest gratitude to my participants in this research, who so generously opened their lives, their stories, their offices and homes in a clear embodiment of the basic generative nature of the field of composition. I have learned much from you about what it really means to be enthusiastic, effective teachers, scholars, and administrators, and remarkable people as well. I must also thank my committee, David Downing and David Hanauer, and particularly my advisor, Claude Mark Hurlbert, for continually pushing me to be a better scholar and writer. Claude, I am sure you supported me behind the scenes in ways of which I am not aware. And as all IUP graduate students know: Beverly Obitz, you are amazing. You catch us at the tail end of this process, when we are weary and disheartened, and you manage to make the last stretch so much easier.

Behind anyone who pushes through a particularly lengthy doctoral process is the support of many. First on that list for me are some amazing girlfriends. To Amy Jo Minett and Heidi Ann Stevenson: you have listened, commiserated, read, and loved me in a way that gave me courage through many years, and I am certain, for many years to come. Heidi, you cheered me on with power stone earrings, powerful music, the world's most rational pep talks, and the belief that if we could start this together, we could finish it together. I hope you will be my CCCCs roommate 30 more years. Amy, my gentle reader, muse, and one-person think tank: your curiosity and enthusiasm inspire me, and your insightful responses always helped me become a better writer and thinker and let me

feel more academically engaged. Our long talks, punctuated by that fabulous, deep laughter, sustain me. Heidi and Amy, each of your individual, deep intelligence and capacity to love humble me. Thank you, friends of my soul. Thank you, too, to Jennifer Reilly Campbell, my colleague and fellow woman warrior at the University of Denver: how fortunate I am to work with such a reliable, talented, dedicated, and compassionate friend. I will always be grateful for your dear, open heart and remarkable mind.

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Most writers know the fear of letting their writing go into the world, unarmed. I am so fortunate that I found a safe place to get feedback with a group of talented and insightful people: Eric Bateman, Ann Braley-Smith, David Daniels, Richard Halsey, Matt Hill, Kathleen Klompfen, Eliana Schonberg, and again, John Dunn, Jr., Amy Minett, and Heidi Stevenson. It takes a group to raise a writer; thank you for being a part of that group. And to my dear friend and sparring partner, Kurt Bouman: we may be about equal in the number of times we've moved each other and on the flash-to-coffee-spill ratio, but I owe you for being such a calm, wise colleague when I needed it most.

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thank especially Eliana Schonberg and Doug Hesse. Eliana, you listened even when you didn't have time to listen and freely loaned to me your unflagging optimism. And Doug, we first met on this very research trip, sipping good coffee at your dining room table, your dogs playing under our feet. Doug, at the most crucial moments, you encouraged me, loaned me books, swapped ideas, and convinced me through your own passion that I do indeed have something scholarly to offer. You inspire me by example with your ferocious work ethic and your true passion for and knowledge of composition. You are a remarkable scholar, administrator, teacher, and mentor, and I work with you with pride—and I will always remember the *clink* of beer bottles at The Field Museum in Chicago that started my journey to DU.

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Finally, my heart overflows to my family: My grandmother, Dorothy Bailey Custer, now 99: you taught me to read and write and keep on moving; my grandfather, Boyd Beddes Brown (1918-2003): you always encouraged me to get all the education I could, no matter how difficult; my mother, June Matteson: you continue to teach me that life is about meeting adversity and always bouncing back with true honor; my brother,

Jeff Custer: you answered all my technology questions with your trademark humor and patience; and my brilliant niece, Stephanie: you deserve a portion of this degree by virtue of your excellent transcriptions.

Especially, I want to thank my brother, Greg Custer. You answered the phone at three in the morning, acted as my personal counselor, life coach, and task master, wouldn't allow me to give up, believed in me, loved me, and were always proud of your little sister. You went the distance with me, quite literally, and let me put my hand on your shoulder when I needed help finding my faith in myself again. Greg, it is not an exaggeration to say that I am absolutely certain I could not have done this without you. Should it be necessary, I will hold up my end of the *The Accidental Tourist* scenario, with the doddering siblings living out their days in some ramshackle Victorian, Scrabble boards in every room.

And those Scrabble boards bring me to my dad, Gary Lee Custer (1938-2009): I dedicate this to you. You missed seeing me complete this degree by just over a year, and, oh, how I wish I could have found a way to finish this before you died. You taught me to love research through a set of 1964 World Book encyclopedias, to thirst for knowledge, to explore words, and to test my strength until I found both its depth and breadth. You sat up late with me one night, looking through grad school material, listening to my dreams of finally going back for a doctorate. A few months before you died, you told me that you knew I'd be okay because I am strong and powerful. I have held those words to me as a both hope and benediction. You would have read every word of this document because you would have been both genuinely interested and tremendously proud, and with all that I am, I wish you were here to do just that.

TABLES OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER 1 | 1 |
| THE MAPS OF OUR EXPERIENCE..... | 1 |
| A Personal Path..... | 2 |
| Connecting to the Field..... | 4 |
| The People of Composition | 5 |
| Mapping out the Study..... | 7 |
| Choosing Research Participants..... | 7 |
| Traveling Plans | 11 |
| Conversational Strategies | 12 |
| Questions and Approaches..... | 12 |
| Stories of Composition | 16 |
| Interviews into Narratives..... | 16 |
| “To Tell Afterward” | 17 |
| CHAPTER 2 | 21 |
| DONALD A. MCQUADE..... | 21 |
| University of California, Berkeley..... | 21 |
| Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview | 23 |
| The Place of the Essay | 23 |
| Advertising..... | 28 |
| Writing Studies and the Teaching of Composition..... | 30 |
| Thinking, Writing, and Seeing..... | 32 |
| Interview: A Conversation with Don McQuade | 34 |
| Childhood and Family..... | 34 |
| Education, Teaching, and Administration | 36 |
| Experience with CCCC..... | 44 |
| Leaving Berkeley..... | 47 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 49 |
| ANNE RUGGLES GERE..... | 49 |
| Kirkwood, Missouri | 49 |
| Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview | 50 |
| The Social Connections of Writing and Literacy..... | 50 |
| Composition/Rhetoric and English Studies | 59 |
| Teacher Education..... | 62 |
| The Personal, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and American Indian Literacy | 65 |
| Interview: A Conversation with Anne Ruggles Gere | 71 |
| Childhood and Family..... | 72 |
| Education, Teaching, and Administration | 75 |
| Experience with CCCC..... | 81 |
| Leaving Kirkwood, Missouri..... | 86 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER 4 | 88 |
| LILLIAN BRIDWELL-BOWLES | 88 |
| Louisiana State University | 88 |
| Scholarly Works: A Partial Overview | 89 |
| Computers and Composition..... | 89 |
| Diversity and Discourses | 94 |
| Student Identities | 102 |
| Interview: A Conversation with Lillian Bridwell-Bowles..... | 103 |
| Childhood and Family..... | 104 |
| Education, Teaching, and Administration | 109 |
| Experience with CCCC..... | 114 |
| Leaving Louisiana State University..... | 116 |
| CHAPTER 5 | 119 |
| JACQUELINE JONES ROYSTER..... | 119 |
| The Ohio State University | 119 |
| Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview | 120 |
| Pedagogy, Composition Studies, and Race..... | 120 |
| African American Women’s Rhetoric and Historical Ethnography | 126 |
| Rhetor and Orator | 131 |
| Traces of a Stream..... | 137 |
| Interview: A Conversation with Jacqueline Jones Royster | 144 |
| Childhood and Family..... | 145 |
| Education, Teaching, and Administration | 150 |
| Experience with CCCC..... | 154 |
| Leaving Ohio State University | 157 |
| CHAPTER 6 | 160 |
| NELL ANN PICKETT | 160 |
| Hinds Community College, Mississippi | 160 |
| Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview | 161 |
| Technical Communication | 161 |
| The Mission of Community Colleges | 167 |
| Interview: A Conversation with Nell Ann Pickett..... | 173 |
| Childhood and Family..... | 174 |
| Education, Teaching, and Administration | 176 |
| Experience with CCCC..... | 180 |
| Leaving Hinds Community College | 182 |
| CHAPTER 7 | 185 |
| LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD..... | 185 |
| Influence as Decision..... | 186 |
| Decisions and Unplanned Interruptions..... | 187 |
| Responses to Unplanned Interruptions | 190 |
| McQuade Meets Berkeley..... | 190 |
| Gere Makes It Work..... | 191 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Bridwell-Bowles Meets Life..... | 192 |
| Royster Finds Balance | 193 |
| Pickett Builds on Experience | 194 |
| Finding a Home | 195 |
| The Larger Map of Composition | 195 |
| WORKS CITED | 200 |

“One goes, not so much to see but to tell afterward.”

John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*

CHAPTER 1

THE MAPS OF OUR EXPERIENCE

In the departmental office where I teach, we have a large map of the world hanging on one wall. Colorful, round-headed pins are sunk into the many places our faculty members first called “home.” Several are clustered together around the Midwestern United States and then a few in the East; some dot the West near the school, with a few more in the South. Some are placed outside the United States. One pin, sunk into the middle of Texas, holds a small red heart underneath it. I pushed my pin in a small town in southern Idaho, about 40 miles from the Nevada border.

We are all familiar with a map such as this one, from a variety of contexts. But if that wall were to hold a professional map of our work in composition studies, I wonder how well we would be able to pinpoint our starting places, or even our intended routes and our planned destinations. Could such a map to composition studies exist? Would we be able to plot upon it, based on the map’s markings, the route to our ideal jobs? Or would those points be marked for us, a one-size-fits-all easy guide to how our career maps should be? Although certainly plotting out a career path can’t be as easy as this, I wanted, with this project, to learn from established scholars in the field of composition what routes they had taken to get to where they are. I was curious to know how their own beginnings influenced their later successes and if certain paths were common to

successful scholars. I set out to explore some of these ideas, beginning with an understanding of my own starting points in composition.

A Personal Path

Were I to sink one of those small pins into the map of my own professional timeline in composition, I would choose the exact starting point as a morning in January, 1991, when I walked in to meet my first solo class of composition students at Idaho State University. Prior to that day, I had mentored for a semester with a professor in his composition course and had taken a semester of graduate courses, including composition pedagogy. I knew the required text well and had carefully crafted writing assignments based around its chapters. Armed with purple dittos and the most professional, make-me-look credible outfit I could find, I felt ready. Yet at the beginning of class, I looked down to see my skirt trembling from my own nerves. I worried that I would never even make it past the roll sheet, which ended with a student's very-Polish last name and a first name containing an overabundance of consonant clusters. When I reached that name on the roll sheet, I had to admit to him that I simply couldn't pronounce it. Somehow this admission allowed a true beginning of the class for me. Then I was in love—not with the young Polish student, although I soon learned that both he and half that class were older than my then ridiculously young age of 22. No, I was in love with teaching, and specifically with teaching writing. In spite of my efforts to be ready for the course, I entered my own classroom unprepared to become besotted. That morning, right then, is where my professional journey really started.

Some journeys meander, with road maps tossed into the back seat and the cues for stopping coming only through “historical site ahead” or “restroom, one mile” signs. My

travels in composition began that way. I entered the field, as did most of us at that time, as a literature person—Victorian fiction for me. I fantasized about teaching the “seminar in a circle,” with eager students earnestly sharing their reflections about Elizabeth Gaskell and the women of Victorian society. If a female equivalent of the tweed jacket with leather elbow patches were made, I would wear it. And so, I wandered into teaching composition as a first path toward my fantasy life in literature. After I finished my Master’s degree, composition became part of how I *paid* for my life, as an adjunct instructor. But the more I taught, the more I wanted composition to *be* that life.

This professional journey started that morning in January, where I first learned how to pronounce “Pzermek,” but I would make many stops along the way toward making this new country of composition my home. In many ways, I fit a particular and perhaps familiar niche among composition teachers. In those few years when I began my teaching as a young T.A., I was trained by professors who, all but a few, started *their* training in the field of literature. Over the course of the next several years, I would occasionally be a freeway adjunct, driving over 50 miles so that I could teach; I would be a night adjunct, working other jobs during the day so I could afford to teach in the evenings; and I would be a member of English departments, teaching writing, introductory literature courses, first-year seminars, and for a time, Writing Center theory and methods. I would occasionally feel a true member of these departments and at other times, I would feel like only a drop-in visitor to them.

Although I worked along the way to explore more composition theory, I felt like the “accidental adjunct” Wendy Bishop describes (34). I didn’t yet feel that I lived in composition; I just taught there. Then in 2001, I metaphorically pulled over to look at the

map and planned a more purposeful route toward understanding composition. I returned to school to begin my Ph.D. studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), taking courses in rhetoric, linguistics, and composition theory. This is where I would place the second pin into the map of my experience. I studied the history of composition theories and how the field had both expanded and legitimized itself through connection to other disciplines. I learned about social and cognitive linguistics, literacy studies, and the many ways of researching in the field. But these connections were all to theories, to ideas that felt distant from a true connection with the field and even from my own teaching.

Connecting to the Field

I found the beginning of a more tangible connection on the morning of March 21, 2002, when I attended my first Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) convention in Chicago, Illinois. I sat with over 2,000 other composition teachers in the large ballroom of the elaborate Palmer House Hilton Hotel. Following introductions of the faces of names I had only read (including IUP's own Wendy Bishop), a tall man with a shock of white hair from a community college in California I had never heard of presented "All Good Writing Develops on the Edge of Risk." The speaker was John Lovas, from De Anza College in Cupertino, California. As a newcomer to CCCC, I didn't quite understand what his role was; I would later learn that he was the Chair of CCCC, giving the traditional address at the convention in the year after he had planned the previous convention's program. Lovas shared his own early journey with literacy, as well as his background in CCCCs and its companion organization, the Two-Year College Association (TYCA). He recounted his early CCCC conferences and his "transformative" experiences that happened in the cities of those conference sites. At that

particular CCCCs, where I sat as a member of the audience, Lovas challenged us: “As we each pursue our individual and special interests at this conference, let each of us reflect on points of solidarity with the whole. As each of us returns home with renewed creativity and commitment, let us remain open to learning from one another” (281). Throughout the address, he focused on “The Universal, the common, the collegial: the many voices of our professional conversation.”

I was riveted, both by his passionate manner and by what he was saying. Here was the story of someone else’s journey. His remarks about individual interests and finding the solidarity within them clarified for me that a general (but not generalized) understanding might come through exploring those specifics of another compositionist’s road. Following that opening address, I joined the large crowd moving out into the conference, toward presentations, book fair visits, and conversations in hotels, bars, in the lobby, on the street, and at receptions. I entered at last a larger realm of membership in the world of composition-rhetoric and the people who cared about it. I began to comprehend the power of the individual and the power of the whole.

The People of Composition

I did not yet have the temerity I would later find to introduce myself to the names who had written the theory I was reading; instead, after this conference, I sought out more narrative accounts about and from the people in composition, including Roen, Brown, and Enos’ *Living Rhetoric and Composition: Stories of the Discipline*. These editors asked 19 composition scholars to explore why they, too, loved composition, and the respondents intertwine stories of their personal and professional lives. In this text, I learned that Edward P.J. Corbett sometimes felt he was a fraud, as I, too, found myself

sometimes worrying about my own teaching (6). I learned that James Kinneavy had once taught at Western State College in Colorado, an institution where I also taught for three years (106). I learned that Duane Roen had been raised on a farm, as I was, and that he recognized the specific type of work ethic that such a life instilled (123). And I related directly to Wendy Bishop as she wrote about traveling the same streets of the same small town I where I lived for my own doctoral work (33). In all these stories, I found unexpected companionship and a clearer understanding of the personal and professional paths these other compositionists had taken. These narratives in *Living Rhetoric and Composition* are fascinating glimpses into the lives of people who had before been only names on a book cover to me.

But I wanted to hear more of this kind of story, and I wanted to add the element of personal interviews to help me learn even more—the stories behind the stories. In effect, I wanted to extend Roen, Enos, and Brown’s inquiry. Thus I decided to carefully focus on a small group of people to understand and expand on *Living Rhetoric and Composition*’s question of “how did you come to love composition?” By looking to very established members of the field, I wanted to see how my own love of the field compared to the stories of others. How did their personal and professional lives intertwine to bring them to the accomplished place they inhabited as teachers, scholars, administrators, and leaders? What personal and professional decisions did they make along the way to bring them to where they were then? Could these kinds of decisions be a guide for a compositionist like me to reach a desired stage in my own professional journey?

With my doctoral coursework completed and a lot of theory helping me as I returned to teaching part time, I set out to find some of the answers to these questions. I

planned a trip, a summer and early fall of interviews with 13 past Chairs of CCCC, experienced and recognized leaders who are both teachers and scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric. Driving over 12,000 miles, I drove as far south as Baton Rouge; skimmed Houston on the way up to Dallas; stopped in Arizona on the way west to Berkeley; drove through Nevada and Idaho and north to Washington; cut down to the middle of the country and then headed north, up to Houghton, Michigan. In the fall, I took separate, brief outings from my home in Pennsylvania: east to College Park, Maryland, west to Columbus, Ohio, and slightly east again to University Park, Pennsylvania. As I met with these 13 Chairs of CCCCs, I hoped to hear their stories firsthand so that I could move closer to answering my questions: How does the personal and professional combine for these composition teacher-scholars? What strategies had they undertaken toward success in this field? Did these successes follow a commonly anticipated route? With a more in-depth understanding of their routes or paths to the profession, how might I connect this to my own life, and how might others in composition also learn from these lives?

Mapping out the Study

Choosing Research Participants

When I decided I wanted to seek answers to my questions with active compositionists, I clearly had an entire country's worth of experienced teachers, scholars, and administrators from whom to choose. I could have used a carefully random selection process to try to find a suitably diverse range of participants, or even a "dart board" approach that would provide random selection with nothing careful about it, but I realized that both approaches would inevitably end up being neither random nor diverse. Looking

for a logical list of experienced compositionists, I decided on interviewing CCCC chairs, beginning from the Chair of the 1990 convention to the Chair of the 2005 convention. I chose 1990 as the beginning year, as this was when I started my own graduate work; I extended this for 15 years in hopes of finding information that would also be helpful to the graduate students beginning their own work as the field continued to blossom.

According to the “Elections” section of the CCCC website, when the CCCC Chair is elected, care is taken to vary the two nominees for the position from year to year so that an overall cross-section of the field is covered. Article IV, section 1, part b of the CCCC Constitution states of the Executive Committee in general: “So far as practicable, the membership of the Committee (including ex officio members) will be evenly distributed geographically, and will be drawn from universities, four-year colleges, and two-year colleges, and will represent the range of professional interests addressed by the Conference.” Furthermore, of the Chairs in particular, Doug Hesse, the 2005 Chair, explained:

While there are no codified guidelines for balancing the CCCC chair slots, practice, embodied as wise lore from Nominating Committee to Nominating Committee, has always been attentive to race/ethnicity in the chair's rotation. To a lesser extent (although explicitly more in the past) gender has received attention too. I'll note that in the four years I'll have been a CCCC officer, I'll have been the only elected male. I think, then, we've become fairly gender blind, which is probably a healthy thing, though we'll need to monitor this. With only four people in the chair's sequence at any time, and needing to balance institutional type,

geography, and professional interests, it becomes tricky to factor in other identities, though I think the Nominating Committees have wrestled valiantly to attend to diversity.

The chair position is a four-year commitment, moving from a year as Assistant Chair, then Associate/Program Chair (when the Chair is responsible for planning the conference), to the Chair (when the keynote address is presented at the conference), to Immediate Past Chair. As I would further learn from my interviews, the Chair is nominated by a member of the organization, usually by a senior member who has already consulted with the nominee about the idea. The nomination may be influenced by a number of factors, but primary is the support of another member of the organization believing that the person nominated as Chair is in a good position professionally and personally to do the job well, as well as the potential nominee's own assessment of these same abilities. Each member of CCCC then receives a ballot from which to vote for Chair (between two names) and any other open positions, such as members of the Executive Committee. As Hesse indicated in the personal message he sent to me, above, members of the Nominating Committee work to create a board which strongly reflects the diversity of the field.

Therefore, interviewing a group of Chairs gave me the advantage of an already planned diversity as well as an assumed representation of the field because of its elected status. So with this "pre-diversified" group from a variety of institutions and backgrounds, ultimately, of those who consented, my participant list became 13 former and (then) current CCCC chairs. I list them here, with the year when they were Chairs, in the geographical order that I visited them in the summer of 2004:

- Kathleen Blake Yancey, Clemson University, Clemson, SC (now: Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL) (2004)
- Nell Ann Pickett, retired in 2000 from Hinds Community College, Raymond, MS (1997)
- Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA (1993)
- Jane E. Peterson, Richland College, part of the Dallas County Community College District, Dallas, TX (1990)
- John Lovas, De Anza Community College, Cupertino, CA (sadly, since deceased) (2002)
- Donald McQuade, The University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA (then Vice-Provost of the University; now teaching again full-time) (1991)
- Victor Villanueva, Jr., Washington State University, Pullman, WA (1999)
- Douglas D. Hesse, Illinois State University, Normal, IL (now: University of Denver) (2005)
- Anne Ruggles Gere, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (interviewed at her then home in St. Louis, MO) (1993)
- Cynthia Selfe, Michigan Technical College, Houghton, MI (now: The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH) (1998)
- Shirley Wilson Logan, University of Maryland, College Park, MD (2003)
- Jacqueline Jones Royster, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH (Currently Executive Dean of Arts and Sciences) (1995)
- Keith Gilyard, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA (2000)

Given the limits of time and circumstance when writing a dissertation, I chose to work with five of the participants here in this study: McQuade, Gere, Bridwell-Bowles, Royster, and Pickett. I started with the 1991 Chair, Donald McQuade, which was the year when I began my own teaching in composition. I plan to return to the remainder of my data in the future in hopes of sharing such important oral history with other young composition scholars. Those particular stories are certainly not lost, but waiting for continued analysis.

Traveling Plans

To more fully understand each participant, I chose to travel to them rather than meeting at conferences. I wanted a clear picture of where these teacher-scholars do their work, including the institutions as a whole, their departments, and sometimes, their homes. Logistically, I knew that scheduling interviews with 13 people during the summer was going to be difficult. One afternoon in the early spring, while holding ill-attended office hours underneath the blossoms of my favorite tulip tree on IUP's campus, I used the small map in my planner and the calculator on my phone to plan out the overall miles of the trip. I placed the participants in regional order. These two pieces of information let me know that I needed a day for driving between interviewing Kathi Yancey in Clemson, South Carolina, and Nell Ann Pickett, in Raymond, Mississippi, as they were over 700 miles apart. I emailed participants, established times, and mapped out a route to most efficiently travel to each location. The participants were all as accommodating as possible, and eventually, my calendar was set.

In preparation for this work, I investigated institutional websites, departmental sites, and local maps to immerse myself in their worlds. This let me identify such matters

as where the library was in relation to their offices, the names of the buildings on campuses, and other critical orientations to their institutions and departments; this preparation also allowed me to explore the campus upon my arrival and still find my way to our designated interview sites. I interviewed Anne Ruggles Gere at her home in St. Louis, so I also planned a stop later in the trip to tour her home campus at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. As Gubrium and Holstein explained, such attention to the local culture “adds complex meaning to individual accounts, which at first appeared en masse, anonymous, and narratively mute. The individual accounts, in turn, enliven the place of a narrative environment” (141). As I would find, for example, experiencing the headiness of Berkeley in the summer informed my understanding of Don McQuade; driving into Columbus, Ohio, helped me view the geographical area as Jackie Royster sees it. The physical landscapes, the changes in temperature from outside to inside air conditioning, the smells of buildings and atmospheres of the places of student interaction—all of these details helped me to further distinguish the individual nature of these stories. I also took notes of my impressions of the campuses and towns and used my digital recorder to capture further thoughts as I drove, both about what I had experienced but also how it seemed to connect to my own experiences.

Conversational Strategies

Questions and Approaches

As an underlying attitude toward the interviews, I kept in mind the metaphor offered by the Danish qualitative researcher Steinar Kvale: the interviewer as traveler. Kvale explains that the interviewer can be thought of through two different metaphors, as a miner or as a traveler. The miner “digs nuggets of data or meanings out of a subject’s

pure experiences, unpolluted by any leading questions,” thus following a more positivist view of truth. The interviewer as traveler, however, “wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them” (3-4). Although I did create a list of questions, I chose to use them in my interviews as a guideline as opposed to a tight script, letting the narrative take us where the stories might lead, thus getting a stronger impression of each participant as an individual as well as an important voice in the field of composition.

One point of advice stayed with me as I began to envision the interviews I would conduct, from Rubin and Rubin: “You tailor the type of qualitative interviewing you do to the types of questions with which you are personally comfortable” (40). Furthermore, they write that “qualitative research is personal, not detached. Who you are counts. Your interest, curiosity, and concern encourage the conversational partner to discuss the topic at length. Your ability to recognize, accept, and share emotion legitimates its expression in the interview” (41). Therefore, because part of opening a conversational interview was helping my participants get to know me as a person, student, and scholar, at the beginning of each interview, I shared a brief version of my own story. I also mapped out for them my interviewing trip in order to give them a sense of the professional landscape I was exploring. I wanted my interviews to be the “guided conversations” that Rubin and Rubin mention rather than a straight session of question and answer, so I drafted several basic questions, planning on further probes and the natural rhythms of storytelling to lead the conversation. I settled on the following beginning questions:

- How did your family background shape you as a professional?
- What were your early experiences with education, up until graduate school?

- In what ways has your personal life shaped you as a teacher and scholar?
- What choices do you make as you interact with students and your professional world to reflect you as a teacher and administrator (if applicable)?
- How did role models and mentors help shape you as a professional?
- How have the particular institutions in which you have taught or teach now contribute to your work?
- If you are working now solely as an administrator, do you still think of yourself as a teacher? Why did you choose (or *did* you choose) this administrative post?

As much as I had enjoyed and value the *Living Rhetoric and Composition* collection, I wanted to use these interviews as a chance to go beyond that volume's restriction of each writer's 3,500 words about why they love composition. I hoped to do that by broadening the scope to include how their backgrounds contributed to their work, including their immediate families and educational experiences, and their experiences with the CCCC organization. Finally, at the end of each interview, I asked two questions: Where do you see the field of composition-rhetoric heading in the future? And, what question have I not asked that you feel I should have asked? I did not always get through all the questions I planned, but because most of the participants could be more generous with their time in the summer than they might have been during the regular academic year, I also learned more about some of them beyond the interviews, such as during meals and visits to their homes.

In many ways, I was asking my participants to construct a life history of sorts, a professional biography. As Anthony Giddens points out, we not only "have" this biography, but we *live* it, "reflexively organized in terms of flows of social and

psychology information about possible ways of life.” Most important, rather than a life story being one which happens to the subject or is told by the subject, Giddens argues that “self-identity . . . [is] something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual” (52). Identity, then, is formulated, and in this context, it is formulated *through* my conversation with the participants. As David Hanauer might explain it, it is “produced in interaction and through discourse” (56). In considering these participants’ formulated identities as “not personal but rather representational and present within discourse itself” (Hanauer 57), these conversations offer another level of understanding the people I interviewed. These exact identities would not have been established without our discourse in the interview environment influencing (but not *determining*, as Hanauer points out) their presentation of themselves.

In addition to formulating my guiding questions, I considered carefully the protocol I would follow for conducting the interviews. As I set up my equipment, I would work to engage each participant in preliminary “small talk,” based on my campus touring, my trip so far, or some other common ground, such as knowing that Lillian Bridwell-Bowles grew up in Florida near where I had lived for three years or that Nell Ann Pickett and I could compare childhood stories of tractor driving. I then planned to use this “pre-discussion” to help ease us into the interview process, thus creating the “conversational partnership” discussed by Rubin and Rubin, and also setting the tone “of natural involvement” for the interview (129). I also planned for the interviews to take place in a fairly small, familiar space, such as the participants’ office, home, or in a small conference room. For recording, I would use a digital recorder with a good internal microphone as well as an old-fashioned “shoebox” style audio tape recorder with a

microphone attached. I chose to use 60 minute tapes, 30 to a side, for that audio recording. It meant more tape flipping, but the lengthier tapes are usually thinner and, therefore, more fragile. Later, I would digitize these analog tapes as well, but recording with both methods allowed me to have a back-up. To cut down on reverberations, I placed the microphone on a t-shirt I had designed and planned to give to each participant. I planned to keep a clipboard with questions to take any notes of points to which I wanted to return, but overall, I would take few notes, relying on the technology so that I could keep eye contact, thus maintaining as much of the comfortable, participant (rather than “subject”) level interaction as possible.

Stories of Composition

Interviews into Narratives

Although I had read several stories from or about these participants in published accounts, hearing them in person allowed me to question the “texts.” Some participants had included portions of their personal stories in CCCCs addresses; some used their own experiences to illustrate points in other publications, such as Bridwell-Bowles’ “Film Clips and the Master’s Tools”; in a few cases, other people had contributed the personal stories of my subjects to other volumes, such as to Ballif, Davis, and Mountford’s *Women’s Ways of Making it in Rhetoric and Composition*. However, by telling stories (perhaps again) to a questioning audience, the participants could reshape their tales into ones which might have never been told at all. The experience of a story told in person involves more intimacy in the sense used by classical rhetoric’s definition of paths toward different levels of ethos. Such tellings are often more intimate in their detail and expressiveness because of the basic iterative process that an interviewer can guide.

Detailed stories such as these are too often kept to ourselves, or to small groups of people to whom they might “matter.” However, these particular stories certainly matter to any of us who want to know more than the published version can give, and even to those who may not yet realize the power of knowing more. In fact, as Pagnucci declares, stories “count for everything. Without them, we’re just molecules taking up space. We’ve got to tell our stories, no matter how small they are. It’s the only thing we can do” (149). The value of individual stories of composition is what compelled the creation of *Living Rhetoric and Composition*, and certainly this is what compelled me toward writing this dissertation and to complete interviews in person.

“To Tell Afterward”

After I returned from interviewing, I needed to decide on the best way to present these stories. I decided to first introduce the five scholars I had chosen to write about as if to an audience of graduate students starting in the field, as I had been. I wanted new members of the field to understand both the scholarly and personal aspects of these people, although the audience need not be limited to students or to less experienced compositionists who are searching for answers about the paths they may travel in this field. For members of a broad audience, I wanted to tell my own story of coming to know these participants, both through their scholarly works and through their interviews, and allow them to tell their stories through me.

To try to capture these ideas, I offer here “profiles” of these five participants, beginning with an overview of their scholarly publications designed to show the main lines of inquiry he or she has chosen to follow. I then narrate the story of our interview. I chose this method with the awareness that narrative is frequently used in composition

research and has been for some time; a prime example of this is Roen, Brown, and Enos' *Living Rhetoric and Composition*, as mentioned earlier. However, narrative is admittedly still not a *privileged* methodology, particularly not on the dissertation level. As Gian Pagnucci writes, "Few dissertation studies are written or structured in a way to allow [us] to receive stories" (24). He attributes this in part to an "antinarrative bias" in the academy (17). Deciding to use narrative, Pagnucci believes, is an "ideological choice," one which can lead to a "deeper understanding of the issues involved" (44). In connection with this idea, John Lovas, in his opening address that welcomed me to my first CCCCs, states that part of the basis for a writer's grade in his courses is the writer's willingness to take risks. Lovas himself takes a rhetor's risk by mixing his personal and professional impressions, along with his metathinking on the address itself, which he presented in PowerPoint projected behind him. In this spirit, I chose to take the risk of using narrative in this study. My goal was to better understand what I had already experienced and to give my audience a strong sense of these people as well. From these profiles, my intent is not just to explore how my own life in composition might be, but also to help others reading these stories, especially those new to composition, to reflect on how they might individually also fit within this field.

For these purposes, I believe in the power of stories. James Herrick explains in "Narration in Argument," one of the essays in Bishop and Ostrom's *The Subject is Story: Essays for Readers and Writers*:

We usually categorize stories or narratives as something other than persuasive arguments, and rightly so. We see them as entertainment, or works of the imagination or as vehicles for expressing deep emotions. And

stories are all of these things. However, scholars in the fields of rhetoric, argument, and persuasion have increasingly recognized the persuasive power of stories. (10)

Rather than using these stories as a form of persuasion about ideas, I am hoping to persuade my audience to understand the personal reality of these participants. Herrick discusses how stories can create a sort of *enargeia* in an argument, something which Perelman renders as “presence,” with stories as a kind of “verbal magic” that can bring that presence to life (Herrick 15; Perelman 117). Perelman explains further that part of the importance of creating presence is to bring together an audience in “communion.” This sense of communion is crucial in bringing participants to life on the page. In fact, as Pagnucci explains, these stories, even within academic work, are important to understanding the human: “How much humanity has to be given up in order to gain reason?” (26) One key goal of my research, then, is to portray that humanity fully in order to persuade my audience that these stories can help us understand the individual aspects of a very diverse field and should be embraced more fully in the field of composition

In the following chapters, I first follow a narrative thread into each profile in order to bring my audience along with me in my experiences. I then provide a partial overview of the participants’ publications, centering on prominent themes in their research. These overviews are intended to help my audience understand who each person is as a scholar as a basis for understanding him or her more personally. I have purposefully started by creating rhetorical distance, using the participants’ last name while discussing the scholarship. As I met with the participants, they became more

familiar to me, and I reflect that by using their first names in the write-up of the interview sections. With each participant, I learned more about the ways one can travel in the field of composition and find a stopping place, and I explore this within each profile. In the concluding chapter, I look back at the ways in which influences, decisions, and responses to unplanned interruptions have helped these participants shape their professional successes. From here, I reflect on what lessons other compositionists can learn from these five people as we map our own professional lives.

“I am large. I contain multitudes.”

Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

CHAPTER 2

DONALD A. MCQUADE

University of California, Berkeley

I drove toward Berkeley the day after my visit with John Lovas in Palo Alto. The Sunday-morning traffic was light as I traveled over the Dumbarton Bridge on I-880 and into the Bay Area. Once I arrived and found my hotel, I spent that day and part of the next wandering UC-Berkeley—the groups of confident, almost swaggering students, the neatly laid-out campus of stately brick buildings, the shops and restaurants abutting the campus. I took a tour and viewed the University from the top of the 307-foot bell tower, the Campanile, gazing in all directions at the campus and the city spread below, with the Bay glistening toward the west, the foothills on either side connected by the graceful Bay Bridge. Some of the most fascinating parts throughout my trip were these changes in venue, from very small schools to huge institutions like Berkeley. They were all the same, in some ways, just on different scales. The bookstores all sold the same types of logo wear, from sweatshirts and tees to flip-flops and key fobs. Increased PR campaigns, especially at the large campuses, have brought a wider variety of the available logoed items: sleek, steel water bottles, stuffed toys, handsomely wrapped chocolates, baby clothes (with wee cheerleader costumes), golf balls, doggie attire, oven mitts, all an odd amalgam of school pride and merchandising. Similarities between institutions aside, there is something electric in the air at Berkeley, even during a summer session. Students

bustled about campus, walking or biking, their book bags bulging; summer conference groups, including teenagers from a church retreat and their already-tired chaperones, crowded toward the dorms; apparent faculty members stopped to chat in front of Sather Gate, a greenish bronze structure leading into campus. McQuade would later explain this charged atmosphere as part of the “Berkeley Standard,” and that standard seemed to shimmer in the perfect, warm air.

When I visited Don McQuade, he was serving as the Vice Chancellor of University Relations and the president of the UC Berkeley Foundation, “a \$400 million not-for-profit corporation that raises, invests, and administers private gift funds for the campus” (“Vice Chancellor McQuade”). In my early research, I learned that he had successfully raised \$1.44 billion for the University, and as such, I expected it would be easy to find such an important figure as McQuade, even on this large campus; but it was more of an undertaking than I had anticipated. I had expected the office to be in one of the handsome brick buildings on campus, marked by a clear sign, but instead I followed the address to a row of shops across from campus, almost a strip mall, each looking rather dilapidated and without matching signage. After several trips up and down the street, checking the address, I found the entrance through a somewhat dark, partial alley, and up a flight of iron stairs. McQuade’s own straightforward comment about his building would be preparation for the man I was meeting: “I’m in this job in an office on top of ‘Cute Cuts’ and ‘Espresso [sic] Experience’ in this third world building. I have vowed . . . to get everybody out of this building and I will do that. We are going to buy the building and probably demolish it.” But to begin to know him as a scholar first, I turned to his publications.

Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview

The Place of the Essay

One of the most prominent areas which McQuade has researched and published is his interest in the essay and its place within the canon of literature. After all, his graduate work was in literature; he graduated in 1972 with his dissertation and its lengthy, three-part title, *I. The Dramatic Functions of an Epilogue: A Study of the Final Speech of The Tempest. II. Convergence of Style: A Study of the Affinities Between Robert Frost and Ralph Waldo Emerson. III. The Exhausted Muse: Shelley's Imagination of Poetry*. He would later return to the issues of stylistics, but the essay is one of his more prominent connections between literature and composition. He demonstrated his own commitment to the essay as an important form of communication (which he believes is equally as important as any more overtly scholarly rumination) in his 1991 CCCC address, “Living In—and On—the Margins” (the back-story for which we discussed in our interview, following). In addressing the field of composition, McQuade explains that he did not intend to speak for the field, as the occasion of addressing the members of CCCC might imply; instead, he chose to weave together his reflections leading up to his mother’s death with his thoughts about writing and the field of composition. In the brief opening to the address, McQuade explains:

I’ve come here prepared simply to tell a story about writing, about writing as a matter of life and death, a story about how I now know much better what I thought I had known before—about the dignity and importance of what we try to do each day in our public and private conversations about

the importance of the work of words in their lives of our students and our own lives. (11)

McQuade chose to use a personal essay format, even in this address, because he believes so strongly in the genre as a way to cross both his interests of literature and composition. Following his plan to “simply tell a story,” McQuade describes visiting his mother, Adelina Pisano, who was gravely ill in the hospital. He muses about how “she never claims authority for herself—for her perceptions, for her experiences, for her distinctive sense of self” (12). He continues, weaving stories from her life with his own experience visiting her. At first she is quite weak, and following another stroke, it seems she will die, but she rallies. For years, she and McQuade had exchanged letters, and following the unexpected recovery from the stroke, she begins to write to him in the hospital, in a shaky hand, apologizing for her handwriting. In her writing, she explains she is proud to have survived, something McQuade realizes “she couldn’t fully release herself into saying . . . directly” (17).

Feeling the worst has passed, McQuade flies back to Berkeley, ordering some wine on the plane as a toast to his mother’s strong will. Looking back at her life and tenacity, he reflects on what it means “to be ‘marginal’ or ‘marginalized’ and to live ‘in’ and ‘on’ the margins,” noting that the term is used negatively, as “those who are ‘marginal’ or ‘marginalized’ lead lives determined—in fundamental ways—by others.” The marginalized are “viewed—and treated—by others as though they were inert, ignored, forgotten, left out too long—like a faded shirt hanging on a clothesline at the back of an abandoned tenement” (18). When Gloria Anzaldua reflects on lives lived in or on the margin, she discusses how the location of the center and the edges are always

changing, which she refers to as “Borderlands.” McQuade connects Anzaldua’s ideas to Adelina Pisano [calling his mother by her name, rather than by her relationship to him, which in fact gives an “outsider effect”], noting that she has also often lived “on the borders” and “in the shadows.” However, with his mother and Anzaldua in mind, he questions the traditional conception of “margins,” especially as it is applied “to individual acts of self-articulation, when applied to speaking, thinking, and writing” (19). Instead of “in” or “on” the margin being a negative space, McQuade reflects that it can mean “in many, respects to be free: to try to reach out, to speak out from behind the veil of silence, to take risks, to take chances, to open themselves to experience in what are possibly, although not assuredly, informative and enduring ways.” With the words of William James in mind—“Experience itself, taken at large, can grow by its edges”—McQuade considers that “margin is not only a place; it is a locus for relations. It may even be an activity. It’s more—not less-than a noun. It’s a noun in process—like the word ‘education,’ or ‘knowledge’, or ‘experience’” (19-20). Both Anzaldua and Adelina Pisano have used their places on the margins to be freeing, to be a place from which they are *able* to speak out, to write, to actually find their voices rather than feeling themselves subsumed.

McQuade turns these reflections toward his students and his work in composition (a discipline which he reflects is often also marginalized), noting that teachers also often live on the margins with their students, placing themselves away from the students, even commenting “marginally.” As such, he notes the difficulty of trying to keep both his students and his teaching in the center of his work, and the way so many students struggle with their own attempts to pull their writing away from the margins. Thinking of his

mother's final request for him to write to her (and, by his extension, to write in general), which is discussed shortly, he is reminded of one of his own students who loved sentences and strived mightily to make them perfect, especially when they were used as transitions, and how she always seemed to feel "stuck *on* the line." A perfectionist, the student struggled with both living and writing, feeling she would never "satisfy the expectations she imagined others had set for her, [and so] she did violence to her sentences and finally to herself" (20). She committed suicide the day after her graduation from Berkeley, and her death made McQuade wonder whether he had failed her as a teacher. With such honest reflections, McQuade continues to explore the connections between his and his mother's cross-continental letter writing, her writing of her wishes toward the end of her life, and our work as teachers of writing. He ends the address with a short scene reflected back of his leaving his mother for the last time (she would die four months later), and her crucial last line in the essay: "You take care of yourself, do you hear . . . and write when you get a chance." As he would later tell me in our interview conversation, reaction to this address was mixed, but he absolutely presented a work he felt was important, placing the essay in a place of power, alongside more "scholarly" (as perceived) offerings.

Part of the mixed reaction may have stemmed from McQuade's lifelong allegiance to both literature and composition; while the personal essay form crosses both, that perception of "less scholarly" is pervasive. His graduate literature studies culminated in his dissertation, which covered issues of style with three literary figures, marks the beginning of a career-long interest in stylistics in several contexts as well as in American literature, although his publications have touched on a wide range of topics. In

“(Re)Placing the Essay” (1996, in *What Do I Know? Reading, Writing, and Teaching the Essay*, edited by Janis Forman), he discusses the marginalized place the essay has held in the literary canon, with little study or teaching of it throughout its history. He traces the changing definition of “essay” in composition from the “genteel tradition” (11) of Montaigne, Swift, Lamb, and others, which he notes was a part of the curriculum into the earlier part of the 20th century to the now more commonly read authors such as Annie Dillard, Gretel Ehrlich, and Lewis Thomas, among others. These essays, however, were assigned mainly to be read, to be written *from*. More recent definitions of the essay are much different, “indistinguishable from such terms as “paper,” “theme,” or even “piece” (12): that is, works meant to be written. These definitions, he explains, place the essay as a form of secondary literature rather than primary; “these ‘essays’ most often can be located at some point along the farthest stretches away from the center of what Northrop Frye describes as the range of literary and public discourse” (12). In both its primary and secondary forms, McQuade believes “the essay offers the most democratic access to the enduring pleasures of reading and writing literature” (19), and he suggests that it should be taught first in composition courses, in replace of the more standard expository exercises.

These same themes resurface in McQuade’s article “Composition and Literary Studies,” in *Redrawing The Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* (1992, edited by Giles B. Gunn and Stephen Greenblatt). Here, McQuade seeks to observe composition from the viewpoint of one who is trained in literary theory and experienced with teaching composition in an open admissions setting. Following a history of composition as a profession and a field, McQuade asserts that “we

need to reclaim for literature *and* composition the essay's identity as a primary form of literature" so that "those of us who teach composition and literature can relax into the knowledge that all of what we teach deserves the same respectful attention previously reserved for literature." Further, he asserts that we need "an even more radical redefinition of what constitutes the literary" in that it should "account for—and include—student writing" (516).

McQuade also edited or co-edited *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1981), *The Winchester Reader* (1991), *The Harper American Literature* (two volumes, 1997, second and third editions, for which he wrote the preface). With *The Harper American Literature* project, McQuade served as both General Editor and Contributing Editor, with his goal as "a comprehensive regathering and reassessment of American Literature" (personal communication, 12 Apr. 2004). With Anne Ruggles Gere and others, in 1997, McQuade received a two-year federal grant, "Making American Literatures," funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which united university educators and high school instructors in rethinking the teaching of American literatures. Through his career, McQuade would remain active in both his scholarly pursuits of literature and advertising.

Advertising

In addition to his attention to literature studies, McQuade explores the wide variety of rhetorics that can inform the teaching of composition. In 1979, He partnered with Robert Atwan, a frequent collaborator, and John W. Wright on *Edsels, Luckies, & Frigidaires: Advertising the American Way*. Noting that "advertisements tell us in miniature a great deal about an entire civilization, its actual material life and interlocking

collective fantasies” (iii), the authors explore a range of advertisements ranging from the late 1800s until the era when the book was published. Selected for their “documentary value” (iv), the advertisements are grouped into three large categories: “Advertising and Social Roles,” “Advertising and Material Civilization,” and “Advertising and the Strategies of Persuasion,” with subsections such as “Women,” “The American Diet,” and “Heroes, Heroines, and Celebrities” prefaced by individual short introductions. In the book’s overall introduction, the authors explain the importance of analyzing ads, claiming them to be “a mirror of social values and . . . a running commentary on the changes and continuities in American civilization” (xx). The 363-page text, with black-and-white reproductions of advertisements on nearly every page, shows a wide ranging look into American culture from a very different perspective than many textbooks provide; instead of the standard carefully selected readings, the advertisements shown have likely been most often perceived as only a tool for merchandising rather than a tool for parsing a society.

Popular Writing in America: The Interaction of Style and Audience, first published in 1974 and created with Robert Atwan, comes from a similar viewpoint as their advertising text *Edsels, Luckies, and Frigidaires*. The text presents examples in larger sections of “Advertising,” “Press,” “Magazine Articles,” “Best Sellers,” and “Classics,” with each section offering a remarkably diverse range of readings. The authors note in the preface that the

categories and sequence were not specially designed to endorse already entrenched hierarchies by setting up fairly obvious gradations in the quality of several particular types of prose, but were intended to illustrate

how various kinds of writing shapes by quite different commercial purposes and intended audiences interact with and modify each other to produce what we can reasonably call a common culture. (xi)

Throughout the textbook, the authors ask students to consider some of their own connections they have made between the discipline of writing and the study of popular culture, which is revealed in different ways through each reading; through this lens, McQuade and Atwan claim that the audience for these pieces is determined out of the readings—the readings create the audience—rather than the audience being predetermined, with the text reacting to an audience expectation, which is an opposite approach to most works. *Popular Culture in America* seeks to offer students and teachers an understanding of a culture as well as its writing; it remained a popular textbook through five editions and almost 20 years.

McQuade also contributed to the *Discourse Studies in Honor of James L. Kinneavy* (1995, edited by Rosalind J. Gabin) with the article “The Promised Land: The Rhetoric of Religion and the Development of American Advertising.” Through an extension of his interest in advertising, McQuade draws a careful comparison to how religion first influenced advertising and how advertising later influenced religion. The comparison seems surprising at first, but plays out as a remarkably astute bringing together of seemingly disparate worlds.

Writing Studies and the Teaching of Composition

It is fitting that McQuade would later be such a strong representative of the both composition and literature, as he explored the professional issues of English Studies throughout his career. For example, in 1976, McQuade analyzed the function of writing

studies with his viewpoint article in *English Journal*, “‘Who Do You Think You’re Talking To?’: Trading Ideas for Insults in the English Profession,” in which he claims that the common term of “Back to Basics” allowed each level of educators—from elementary to middle school to high school to post-secondary—to blame the level before them for the lower abilities of basic writers; that is, rather than blaming the theories, we tend to move closer to blaming the people. As perhaps an antidote to this, McQuade describes the work happening in the English Department at Queens College, which partnered with local secondary schools in their efforts to more fully develop students’ writing skills in “The Writing Program at Queens College of the City University of New York” (1978, in *Options For the Teaching of English: Freshman Composition*, edited by Jasper P. Neel). He continues this work in “Creating Communities of Writers: The Experience of the Queens English Project” (1981, with Marie Ponsot). Within the same theme of how English departments function, McQuade wrote “The Case of the Migrant Workers” (1981), in which he describes the working conditions of the adjunct instructors so prevalent in composition; here, he is careful to note that he is only describing these working conditions, not presenting a case for or against them. He further explores the program at his Queens position in 1986, with Sandra Schor, in “Queens College, NY: The Queens English Project” (in *School-College Collaborative Programs in English*, edited by Ron Fortune).

McQuade edited *Linguistics, Stylistics, and the Teaching of Composition* in 1979, an overview of how composition has connected with linguistics and stylistics to build a more cohesive theory of composition. The volume lapsed out of print when a publisher folded and the work slipped between the cracks, but in 1986, McQuade brought back

some of the original essays, along with some new ones, in *The Territory of Language: Linguistics, Stylistics, and the Teaching of Composition*, the new title of which was a tribute to his professor and friend, Mina Shaughnessy. The text remains a strong compilation of seminal thinking about the teaching of composition, with works by authors from Robert Connors, Ann Berthoff, Kenneth Bruffee, and 22 other theorists or teams of theorists.

Thinking, Writing, and Seeing

McQuade's thoughtfulness about writing and the ways we as people (including our students) experience it is apparent through his several textbooks. In another collaboration with Robert Atwan, first published in 1980, *Thinking in Writing: Structures in Composition*, the authors approach rhetoric and writing processes through cognitive studies (in the same year Flower and Hayes published "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem"). The authors describe the book as "a traditional approach to rhetoric, activated within the context of the most distinguished theoretical and practical work done in the fields of composition and cognitive studies" (xiv). The authors emphasize throughout that thinking and writing are simultaneous practices—not one coming before the other, as other theorists had claimed. With its carefully chosen readings, the textbook endures through four editions and 17 years.

Supporting an earlier reflection of his belief in the importance of student writing, McQuade published with Nancy Sommers in 1984 the first of three texts created around contest-winning freshman essays from across the country, *Student Writers at Work: The Bedford Prizes*. The 29 entries were selected by a panel of judges, including Wayne Booth, Edward P.J. Corbett, and Maxine Hairston. The reader is presented similarly as

other composition readers with readings grouped under separate themes, but the student writings allow other students to see what their peers might write, as opposed to what professionals write. Using the student readings can allow students to feel that their peers had written this way, so could they. Expanding this is the extensive sections on two student writers and their composing processes, the work of peer editors on some of the texts, and the way a professional editor responds to the work. Through this textbook, students not just read the writing of their peers, but also see *how* the writers went about the work; they also are able to begin to cross the bridge to more advanced writing through seeing their peers' writing as professionally edited. Again, through the discussion of writing, McQuade keeps the emphasis on people interacting with people.

McQuade's most recent text, in its third edition in 2006, is *Seeing and Writing*, a collaboration with his daughter, Christine McQuade. With an extensive, interactive website to accompany the latest edition, the text seeks to make a clear connection between the visual and the verbal, and it is filled with visual representation of "text," from advertisements, graffiti, cartoons, photographs, and artwork, as well as examples of how the visual interacts with writing. Throughout the book, each theme is illustrated both verbally and visually, which is more recently studied as multimodality. The text harkens back to *Popular Culture in America*, but here in a more complex, full-color form, and with more focused sections that make it accessible to both students and instructors.

In his scholarly work, then, McQuade widely explores the range of interests a compositionist may cover. Although he branches out to a wide variety of disciplines, he also maintains a consistent research agenda of literature crossing over with composition, of the written text (in its many forms) connecting to the writing of texts.

Interview: A Conversation with Don McQuade

Childhood and Family

Don had scheduled our interview between other appointments, and when he arrived to his office, he wore the ubiquitous (although clearly well tailored) navy blazer. I set up my equipment so that we could sit at the round conference table in the office which was much smaller than I had expected; I had pictured a long, gleaming conference table and a soaring view of the Bay, but found instead this small room with a view of the dingy bricks of the adjacent building. Before we started, Don took off the blazer, hung it in his small coat closet, and replaced it with a navy blue cardigan. With his tall, lean frame and salt-and-pepper hair, he looked much more the teacher he had always remained than the administrator he currently was when we began our conversation.

Don grew up in Brooklyn, a self-described “Brooklyn mutt,” in a “working class Irish-Italian family.” He explained, “I came from a family where my mother’s father was connected to ‘Murder, Inc.’ I grew up in basically an Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn where Johnny Gotti grew up.” In his family, Don had a few options for what he would do with his life: “You could be a cop, you could be a fireman, you could be a teacher, you could be a priest, you could be a nun, or an insurance salesman.” Several members of his immediate and extended family did become teachers, partly because teachers “had a standing in our family . . . that was, after the priest.” Along with the honoring of teachers was the emphasis of a work ethic:

They worked their asses off, my parents. My father had three jobs. He was a probation officer in New York City. My mother worked in an insurance company. She did typing at home at night for insurance companies. He

worked in rec. centers. All of it was designed to get us to go to school. Everything was designed to privilege education, and we all understood that and we didn't screw around with it. I'm sure we were goofy and goofballs when we were kids, but we understood what they were doing. And well, we all wound up as teachers. Go figure.

To illustrate more about his upbringing, Don talked about his childhood neighborhood. Growing up as an Italian, where “you never sit with your back to the door in a restaurant,” gives Don, an elegant, high-powered man, an interesting undercurrent of the “streets.” He related a story from when he returned to New York for his mother's funeral. The return to his old neighborhood (which he didn't specifically name) made him think again of his admiration for the film director Martin Scorsese. Scorsese filmed the movie *Good Fellas* in Don's own neighborhood, and Don felt the director truly understood that life, a life which Don would go on to partially describe to me. In his neighborhood, Don explained, “Everybody says everything twice. ‘How ya doin’, how ya doin’. What’s goin’ on, what’s goin’ on?’” he demonstrated in a perfect, movie-familiar accent. When he last visited, his cousin Eddie asked what he thought about Johnny—and in that neighborhood, everyone knew that meant John Gotti, who was then on trial for murdering one of his own men (because the man had been late for a meeting, Don explained.). Eddie had been friends with Johnny as kids, but as he told Don, “[Eddie] said—I’ll give it a clean version—he said, ‘What happened if the poor son of a bitch got stuck in traffic?’ And I said, ‘Yeah, that’s the problem.’ He said, ‘I don’t want to associate myself with that. That went too far.’ And I can only think. ‘What were the other things that didn’t go too far,’ you know?”

As Don said, he is full of stories. One of the important characters in those narratives is his wife of over 35 years, Susanne, a Swiss-German who was an Olympic skier (“an extraordinarily strong person. I *love* strong women”). Don told me that if I really wanted to get any insights into him, I should talk to her. They met on a ski slope in Vermont, with her skiing expertly down and him trying to show off but not really being able to ski. He believes she understands his competitive nature so well because she is that way herself. Don described a time when they played squash together and he hit a tricky shot into the corner, unreturnable—he thought, but “I stopped and the ball came back right past my head, and I was absolutely, totally startled. I turned around and she looked at me and she said, ‘Don’t ever underestimate me.’ True story. Absolutely true story. She would dive against a wall, sacrifice her body for a point.” The story he thought would truly honor her, though, was about when she typed his dissertation for him. He came home one day to find her by the typewriter, in tears. She asked him to never ask her to do that again—her father had made her quit the national ski team when she was 15 to go to secretarial school and help him in his factory. The hours of typing had brought all that back. Don called that time “one of countless sacrifices that she had made to help me. She is always the centering. She . . . keeps us all together.” Hearing about her, I wish I had scheduled into my trip (and my IRB proposal) side trips to visit with those important in my participants’ lives.

Education, Teaching, and Administration

For his undergraduate work, Don graduated from St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights in 1963 (“I never even applied to anywhere else. I never imagined I could go anywhere else”) on an academic and athletic scholarship. He completed his master’s

(1964) and Ph.D. (1971) at Rutgers University, at a time when many of comp/rhet's elite were also at Rutgers: he studied with Mina Shaughnessy and met once a month to discuss ideas with her and a group of his fellow students, including Janet Emig, Robert Lyons, and Kenneth Bruffee (at Brooklyn College) and later, Sondra Perl, Richard Sterling, and Harvey Wiener. (Several important figures to composition came out of Rutgers as descendants of Reuben Brower and Richard Poirier—10 to 12, Don estimates—including not just this group, but also Linda Flower and Janice Forman, among others.) This line-up of names lists many of the “heavy hitters” in the history of composition. Countless important and seminal ideas started with these people: working with basic writers; the complexity of the writing process; the concept of “felt sense” for writers; collaborative learning and the social construction of language; and the cognitive processes of writers, to list just a few. This was a “dream team” of composition scholars.

This group would go to CCCC together, and Shaughnessy would send each to a different session so they could all “meet at the bars” later and discuss what was happening right then in composition. Shaughnessy was a clear influence on Don, partly because of her ideas and their seminal importance to the field, but also because of her intense charisma and strength:

She was amazing. She was absolutely fantastic. And she was totally seductive All of the men were all in love with her. We all were. We would do anything that she said. And so would the women. She just commanded this . . . she had a presence, and she was really, really serious about this work. Really serious So much of what I have thought or have talked about or written about, her influence was very much [there] . .

. . . For those who know, she was enormously influential Mina made this work and gave it dignity. People who were running comp. programs were the dregs of the universe. They were the faculty that you didn't know what to do with. That all changed in the 70s, and she was at the center of all of that.

McQuade's inside knowledge about such an important figure as Shaughnessy is testament to his own strong background in. Don said her death in 1978 was a "great, great loss" to the field. His accounts of working with Shaughnessy and others composition luminaries make it clear that Don McQuade was also at the center of a crucial time of growth in the field.

This work in the middle of a burgeoning field continued in Don's early teaching, first at New Jersey Institute of Technology, from 1967 to 1970, and then at Queens College, working with Sandra Schor, Marie Ponsot, Rosemary Dean, and Robert Lyons. Of this list of high-powered faculty, Don commented that "more books came out of that English department because everybody took teaching writing very seriously." Don's philosophy of teaching is clear through his description of a self-described mentor, John McDermott, a professor of philosophy and professor of medical humanity at Texas A and M., who was Don's colleague at Queens College, and who Don describes as having "about 18 thousand years worth of experience in his body. [He is a] very smart guy. Tortured, complicated, interesting man." Beyond that, though, Don calls him "the best and the greatest teacher that I've ever come across in my life." When I asked what he found so compelling in McDermott's teaching, Don explained that "when he speaks, he conveys passion. He takes you to the edge of your seat. He conveys not only the love of

what he does, but the seriousness of it and the importance of it. I wouldn't say he's the single most important influence probably in my life generally, but certainly in terms of teaching." It is not surprising that Don was influenced by a man of passion, as throughout our conversation, Don's own passion—in all that he does—was increasingly clear.

Don loved his work at Queens, and he and his family were very happy in New York City. When Fred Cruise, a member of the Berkeley English Department, called him and said, "We want to take composition seriously. Would you help us find somebody?" Don gave him about 15 names, including David Bartholomae, Jackie Jones-Royster, and Anne Ruggles Gere. A few months later, though, Cruise called him back and said, "They all think that we should ask you to come here." Don said that he liked where he was, that he wasn't really interested, but on the other hand, "This is like getting called to the Vatican. Berkley's English department has, arguably, been the best English department for the last 20 or 30 years." The Berkeley department was interested in "the challenge of integrating composition and literature," and that intrigued Don, a topic his published works clearly show interests him. Having held many administrative positions, Don liked the idea of getting back to teaching yet still focusing administratively on one of his passions, and he started at Berkeley in the fall of 1986.

When I visited, Don was in the Vice Chancellor position, one he'd held since 1999. His work entailed all the press and media relations, the government relations, and all the fundraising. When he was nominated for the job, he said, "You gotta be kidding me. I said, 'I'm a mutt from Brooklyn.' [A favorite self-moniker, I learned.] The big issue for me was whether I put the 25 cents in the church collection basket every Sunday. I see philanthropy as—both of my parents were immigrants; the notion of my being associated

with philanthropy was inconceivable.” Eventually, he began to understand that soliciting this kind of philanthropy would help him to achieve his more personal aims of supporting the English department, but would also help to continue the “Berkeley Standard,” which he had come to believe as essential to his work. This rethinking of his role allowed him to think of this new position as a vital service to the University. He decided, too, that if Berkeley had faith in him to fulfill this role, he also would be able to find that faith in himself. He traveled widely for the work, around the world, often on private jets, receiving the kind of treatment that he said could make one “become a real pain in the ass pretty quickly.” Throughout his time as an administrator, then, he has taught because “teaching is a centering and grounding experience. Because it makes you realize why you do everything.” Considering the intense pressures of his administrative post, his choice to continue teaching showed both his passion and commitment to something he finds important, even crucial.

While he was in the Vice Chancellor office, his particular “Brooklyn” style of getting things done became readily apparent, as he often ruffled feathers and fought against the system. For example, he wanted to help his staff as they worked with students at the beginning of the semester; the staff mentioned all the germs they felt exposed to, especially with students hovering over their desks. Don noticed the door was about half glass anyway, so he thought a Dutch door would allow interaction without quite so much contact. When he contacted operations, though, to request a Dutch door, he was told it would take at least seven or eight months. They couldn’t do anything right away unless it was an emergency. Don knew that crucial time for when the door would help was only a few weeks away. As Don told it, “So, two days later, I picked up a chair and threw it

through the glass, and I had [my assistant] call up and say, ‘We have an emergency.’ She said, ‘There’s all this glass all over the place. A ladder fell and hit the door and broke the glass. Any chance you guys could get over here right away?’ And [the guy] said, ‘Oh, absolutely. I’ll be over in a half an hour, 20 minutes.’ She said, ‘Why don’t you bring a Dutch door with you?’ ‘No problem whatsoever.’ So, we got a Dutch door.” As he would say later about this incident and much of his interactions, “I’m a very blunt person, and there’s a lot that I can learn about how to behave by using more indirection, I suppose, but it’s too late for me, I think, to learn how to do that.”

Don’s work as an administrator and teacher, and more directly, as a leader in the field, has similar qualities. He illustrated this with something his friend, David Bartholomae, once said about Don’s career, that he “tak[es] things that exist on the margins and mov[es] them toward the center,” such as his interest in composition at a time when it was not as accepted by the academy, and his interest in affiliating literature and composition with integrity. Don further explained that, for a time, “These activities—public affairs and government affairs and fundraising—were highly marginalized activities here [at Berkeley] and they’re at the center of the financial planning of this campus now.” The comment also applies to Don’s work in composition at Berkeley and elsewhere, which he described as “in the margins of English departments and the margin of the university,” both in terms of power and respect. Don explained that he had worked toward “moving [composition] to the center of the intellectual . . . toward the center. I don’t want to say *in* to it.” Part of that has included his continued dedication to the National Writing Project, for which he been a board member in some capacity since 1996, including chair of the board in 2008. He knows the director, Richard Sterling, from

his days in New York, and calls the organization “magnificent . . . [with] great mission, great principles, [and] they’ve got good leadership. It’s a great organization. They do really good work,” he said, especially in “affecting the lives of the teachers.”

Another side of Don is his lifelong dedication to athletics; to use Said’s terms, this connection could be seen as an affiliation, but it is so close to what is natural to him to be a filiation. Don has competed at the highest levels of sport, as a member of the U.S. and North American champion water polo team and as a member of the U.S. Olympic water polo team in 1984. This led to a lifetime achievement award in the sport of water polo in 2004, thus adding another facet to this intriguing man. Don calls these facets of himself “multiple paths” that allow him to move from one to the other when he has felt pinned to one place. To demonstrate one of these paths, he explained:

Whenever I’ve been finding myself getting trapped in academia, then my sports life has been really accentuated. So, in ’96, I took a semester off . . . to help [the US water polo team] to get ready to go to Atlanta for the Olympics. I’ve stopped that now and I’m getting really antsy, because I need something else to sort of balance out what I’m doing . . . I don’t want to be in a situation where I don’t have options available to me.

But, at the age of 62 at the time of our interview, Don said:

I don’t have many options left, because I’m not a kid anymore. I always say to my kids, I have no clue what I want to do two years from now, and I’m a lot older But you have to be ready There’s a wonderful definition of faith by Ivan Illich, and he says, “Faith is a readiness for surprise.” The question is, how do you get yourself ready to be surprised?

Well, I live on the edge all the time, and there's no excuse for not being prepared. I prepare really intensely for whatever I'm going to do.

So many of Don's beliefs come through this way, in the form of the advice he has given to his two children. Just as he likes to have a variety of options (a theme that surfaces several times), he has told his kids to "never let yourself get into a position where you get cornered." If he feels cornered in a job, it becomes oppressive to him. His clearest example: "The most oppressed day I had professionally was the day I got tenure at Queens College. That's actually very serious, because I thought, holy shit, I don't ever have to do anything ever again; they can't fire me. I thought, wow, that's horrible. So, for me it's always been, 'How do you grow?'" Don is supremely confident, yet he also explains that in many ways, he isn't completely sure of his own sense of self. He explained, "I would say to my kids, ask me to do anything, but don't ask me to be something other than what I'm struggling to find out who I am. Mine's doubly complicated because I don't know what myself is." When I asked him about this line, and about referring to himself twice in our interview as a "Brooklyn mutt," Don clarified that his "insecurities are ontological, they're not operational." He is quick to challenge if someone tells him something cannot be done, but "if you ask me who I am, I start blabbering. I'm 62 years old, and I don't have a clue about what I want to be when I grow up." When I mentioned that from all he told me, he seemed to have a very stable sense of himself, he explained, "That's because I have narrative. Easy to mask it. I just tell stories." He laughingly pointed out, though, that he had received many honors lately, including the water polo award, so "I assume that I'm going to be croaking soon."

Consistently, Don has followed his own advice to “not take himself too seriously” even though he was in one of the more powerful positions in the world of higher education and has competed and coached at the prestigious Olympic level. Even in his busy tenure in the Vice Chancellor position, he remains committed to composition and writing studies, through teaching, publishing, and promoting the organizations he feels are important in the field. In 2006, he resigned his post as Vice Chancellor. He had told me, “Learning to behave in these roles is a really interesting, and as soon as you figure out how to do it, you should get out.” And so he did, returning to teaching, including freshman composition, American studies, and courses on prose nonfiction—the affiliations of special interest he has maintained all along.

Experience with CCCC

The year Don created the CCCC program, 1989, drew, as he estimated, the largest attendance in the conference’s history, with over 5,000 people in attendance at the Palmer House in Chicago (a notorious location for drawing larger numbers). The program included 25 concurrent blocks, with 900 to 1,000 people presenting. One of the most rewarding aspects he found in chairing the conference was that “for that one year [my graduate assistant and I] probably knew as much about the field of composition studies as anyone in the field; that may sound arrogant and I don’t intend it to be.” The knowledge came out of the intense work any chair does in completing the program. Don remains very proud of that program. He commented that while he was riding the (very small and slow) elevators to sessions, “I would listen to people complain about the elevators, but also about the convention and the problem was that there were too many nice things to go to. That was the best compliment that I ever had.” In his tenure as a CCCC officer, Don

wanted to “make sure that the organization [did] better for itself [and] leave it in better shape than [he] got it.” One of his focuses was on the two-year college, on making the issue public, and he created a strand just for the two-year schools and “identified it as such.” He continues to attend CCCs as often as possible, although he hasn’t been involved as much as before. As many seem to have found, work on the CCCC executive committee requires such intense involvement that some end up pulling away a bit from the affiliation following their tenure as chair.

In 1991, when Don addressed the convention, he decided to lean on the genre that he has continually supported, that of the personal essay. He retells much of this story in *Views from the Center: The CCCC Chairs’ Addresses 1970-2005*, although part of his request when I interviewed him was that I send a copy of our interview so that he could use what we discussed as a way to help him write the description of his process for *Views*. As he told me, he decided he would use the occasion of a course he was teaching, English 66: Essayist Literature (another passion of his, as demonstrated in several of his published works). His plan was to write the address early and use it as a tool for modeling revision in the course, which held about 150 students. That didn’t quite work, though. Don found himself starting it over and over, with “throat clearing paragraphs.” His hesitance in starting it, he said:

Was not because I had too much to do or I was lazy or whatever; it was because this assignment was such a daunting task. And I really didn’t know how to go about writing this essay. It was really challenging for me because despite all these titles that I’ve had and my public visibility, I am (though many people I’m sure would argue with it) . . . trained by the

Franciscans, and humility is a very important component to that . . . I didn't think I could dare to speak for the profession.

Finally, after a student reminded him that he promised to do so, he brought in a draft of the essay, on the very day he was to fly to the conference. The address he eventually gave at CCCC focused almost entirely on the narrative of that visit to his mother, but the original paper he presented to his students was more of a two-part structure: “The first part was all about her and the second part was . . . [growling sounds] my voice dropped down eight octaves and it was all about all the significance of this *blah blah blah* and what this meant.” After some time of warming up to the task, the students complained that they didn't like the two-part structure; one student finally said, “Why don't you do what you tell us to do? Why don't you let the narrative make the point? Why don't you just get out of the way and let your Mother make the point?” The critique clearly resonated with Don: “As God as my judge I stood there and . . . it was just as if somebody punched me in the head. . . . It was this shock at what she had said to me and I said, ‘I got it, I understand what you're saying.’ And the last section of that essay I wrote standing in front of that class.” He rewrote the whole piece on the flight to the conference to let the “power of the narrative . . . make the point.” Following his address, he received several letters from people who were deeply affected by the piece, but he also received criticism: “[they said] it was an authorization of the personal and then I was criticized in the articles about the sort of sloppiness and sort of sentimentality of it,” but he didn't really care about the criticism. He felt he was in the middle of both composition and literature—“someone who still carries two passports” (Composition and Literature”

484)—and, therefore, not really accepted by either, so he did feel a great struggle in trying to speak for the field of composition.

As we talked, Don became more and more animated about the stories he was telling. I asked if I had missed anything, if there was something more he wanted to tell me. I suppose I was trying to pull more from him, hoping for some narrative that felt completely new, more heartfelt, more *something*. But as he said, he could “pop open the cans of stories” all day, but I wouldn’t really know him. Stories are important, he explained, because the listener can infer whatever he or she wants from them. He sees his stories as not really talking about himself, but as providing a narrative that could then be interpreted. As we discussed future work in composition, that was his main focus: the stories. “All this oral history,” he exclaimed. “We have to get it down.” And most certainly I agreed with that.

Leaving Berkeley

After Don and I finished our conversation, we exchanged parting gifts—my t-shirt to him and a handsome blue and yellow “CAL” sweatshirt to me, along with Berkeley chocolates. When I left that “third world” building, it struck me how those strange surroundings for someone of his stature were actually oddly right for him. In spite of his high powered position, his roots are still in the Brooklyn he had described. As so many of us do, Don slipped in and out of different parts of his life as easily as he shed his administrator blazer in exchange for the teacher sweater. After talking with Don, it seemed clear that he approaches all he undertakes with an absolute passion—and those undertakings are many. As part of our discussion about how many stories we all have, he is the one who described himself with Whitman’s quote: “I am large. I contain

multitudes.” McQuade’s stories may have been “canned,” but the details in between the narrative let me experience him in a particular way. I did not hike to the bottom of him, as Don is clearly not a man to disclose his deepest secrets. But as he had several times during the interview, he revealed his philosophies of life through advice to his children: “You never let people make decisions about you. You make those decisions, you control those decisions. And I’ve always lived that way. I do not let people make decisions about me.” Don said that he was not something about which others can make decisions, both ahead of a visit or even while actually being with him. Whether it is possible or not to allow others to make decisions about who we are, I can understand how Don McQuade, daughter of Adelina Pisano, this “Brooklyn mutt” who made his home within the Berkeley standard, just might be forceful enough for those outside decisions to be thwarted. I am not certain of the fate of the building he had threatened to knock down, but the new Vice Chancellor of University Relations is located in another office, one that seems to be more a part of the actual campus.

As I drove out of Berkeley to take a side-trip up beautiful Highway 1, I thought about the path that McQuade had taken in his career and both the decisions and the surprises that brought him to the office we had met in that day. Taking the offer from UC-Berkeley may seem like an obviously wise professional move, but he also risked moving out of a very solid background and life in New York. Even with this move, he continued to explore his almost-equal stakes in composition and literature. McQuade reacted with that same force he applied to all of his life and has clearly thrived because of it.

*“Women catch courage from the women whose lives and writings they read,
and women call the bearer of that courage friend.”*

Carolyn Heilbrun, *The Last Gift of Time: Life Beyond Sixty*

CHAPTER 3

ANNE RUGGLES GERE

Kirkwood, Missouri

Although Gere teaches at The University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, at the time of our interview, she was living in Kirkwood, Missouri, a suburb just west of St. Louis. (We would discuss the logistics of this living and working arrangement during our interview; to retain the immediacy of that particular time in Gere’s life, I will retain the tense of the time of our interview, with Missouri in her present life.) With the summer schedule away from teaching allowing her to stay in Missouri more often than during the regular school year, Gere invited me to meet at her home. The land around St. Louis is mostly rolling prairies and the broad flood plains around both the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, leaving the area notoriously susceptible to flooding. I would travel soon to Ann Arbor, to explore the other home in Anne’s life, but as I had been through there before, I marveled at how different this portion of the country looks from the densely forested “arbor” in Michigan. I tried to imagine following her schedule, the weekly change in locations, the travel, the shift between lives, and I honestly couldn’t imagine doing it. Before I would ask her more about that practical part of her life, I turned to her scholarly pursuits.

Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview

The Social Connections of Writing and Literacy

Gere earned her Ph.D. in 1974 from the University of Michigan with her dissertation *West African Oratory and the Fiction of Chinua Achebe and T. M. Aluko*. Following this work with literature, Gere shifted her work largely toward literacy, particularly how it is enacted through writing groups, both academic and extracurricular; composition; the professionalism of the field, including teacher development; and the use of the personal in composition. Gere has published several books and textbooks and contributed over 40 articles to books and journals, but her work with writing groups is her most prominently explored topic. In her CCCC chair's address, "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition," Gere spoke about the literacy that takes place outside of the classroom, a topic she had been researching for some time; she felt the topic was possibly risky for this particular venue, but that it was also important to share (Roen 265). Having completed much of her research for a book she would publish in 1997, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920*, Gere focuses in the CCCC address on those sites where composition happens outside classroom walls, two of which are the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop in San Francisco, which meets in a rented room, and a writing workshop of a dozen writers meeting around a kitchen table in the small town of Lansing, Iowa. As composition instructors, we often equate writing and literacy with formal instruction, but at less formal sites such as the ones Gere discusses, she contends that these writers "bear testimony to the fact that writing development occurs outside formal education" ("Kitchen Tables" 76). In the face of difficult lives and circumstances, women in the

Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop "take strength from finding that their experience is worth expressing" (76), just as many others in such workshops discover "the perception that writing can effect changes in their lives" (77). The success of these workshops is often with writers "deemed unsuccessful by their composition instructors." Gere asserts that such successes through less formal means must be recognized as significant by our field of formal instruction.

We lack the awareness partly because of the ways we have tried to legitimize our place in the academy; Gere believes this has occurred partly because we have traced our history almost solely through what happens in classrooms, a focus which doesn't leave space for the history of writing outside the classroom, the "extracurriculum" of composition. For Gere's purposes, she chooses to expand previous definitions of "extracurriculum" such as those from Frederick Rudolph, Arthur Applebee, and Gerald Graff, which limit it to a "white male enterprise," with women's groups receiving "no more attention than do those of African Americans." These "narratives" suggest that the extracurricular is only a "way-station on the route toward a fully professionalized academic department," one which disappears once departments are fully professionalized. Instead of accepting this definition and narrative, Gere defines "extracurriculum" to "include the present as well as the past . . . extend[ing] beyond the academy to encompass the multiple contexts in which persons seek to improve their own writing; [this definition] includes more diversity [than did Rudolph, Applebee, or Graff] in gender, race, and class among writers; and it avoids, as much as possible, a reenactment of professionalization in its narrative" (80). That is, Gere seeks to consider extracurricular literacy as *part* of professionalization, not simply a means to its ends or a

stepping stone toward the professionalization of literacy. Gere notes that her ideas compare with Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* in looking at the "outside/other" of composition, as well as other projects of literacy outside the curriculum, such as those by Shirley Brice Heath, Glynda Hull, Patricia Bizzell, and Ruth Hubbard. Part of this work of the extracurriculum includes nontraditional "teachers," such as the education that happened through many magazines developed in the 19th century and several "self help groups," especially clubs for those who at that point were not welcome inside classrooms, including women and African American men and women. By including the extracurricular work of writing as an integral part of our professional narrative, Gere believes we can communicate between the extracurricular and the standard curriculum in order to enhance mainstream composition. She compares this process to "tap[ping] and listen[ing] to messages through the walls ... [so we might] consider how we can learn from and contribute to composition's extracurriculum in our classes" (86). Here, she is alluding to the quote from Simone Weil which she included at the beginning of the published version of this address: "Two prisoners in contingent cells communicate by blows struck on the wall. The wall separates them, but it also permits them to communicate" (75). Even though she thought it might be "risky" to discuss literacy outside of the classroom in a forum of professionals dedicated to the *inside* of classrooms, Gere clearly believes that by understanding the extracurriculum of literacy as a part of the continuum of the professional process, both areas might be strengthened.

For Gere, the call for this rethinking of the extracurriculum and professionalization does not mean a belief that that we should stop working to professionalize our field, but rather that we "scrutinize the culture of professionalism"

(87). Such scrutiny may include a new understanding of ideas such as “student body” and “class,” moving beyond the inside-the-classroom definitions, which may help us to be more aware of what the amateur can bring to us, as well as how focusing too closely on professionalism can “blind us to the power relations in our classrooms” (88). Gere urges us to consider our roles as teachers as something larger than the assumed definition, thinking instead of ourselves as “agents within the culture that encompasses the communities on both sides of the classroom wall” (90). Gere’s discussion of the extracurriculum as an idea to work alongside composition, with neither fully overlapping the other, is like the “tapping on walls” image she evokes. In this way, Gere challenges composition to broaden, and therefore strengthen, both our understanding and our practices of teaching literacy.

Gere’s discussion of the extracurricular stems from her archival research for her book *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women’s Clubs 1880-1920*. This research was influenced by a very personal connection: her mother had been a “club woman.” In Gere’s research of women’s clubs, she seeks to show how the extracurriculum of literacy, in “intermediate institutions located between the family and the state,” influenced the lives of women, through “fostering intimacy” and serving both personal and political needs (13). As she covers the many facets of women’s clubs, Gere explains, “The chapters progress from the broadest dimensions of national life, beginning with the state and the economy and then moving to the increasingly specialized discourses of gender, culture, and professionalism” (14). In this text that is as much, or more, about people than theory, Gere explores the ways that book clubs bring a sense of intimacy to their members; how, in historical book clubs, literacy was used as evidence of

citizenship as a way for club members to connect with “the utopia of America” (92); how publications such *Ladies Home Journal* affected the economic underpinning of these clubs; and how book clubs helped women in different classes, races, and religions to change the cultural views of each group; and the impact of clubs in making “culture more accessible” (205). In her sixth chapter, she offers a “revisionist narrative” of literacy studies, claiming:

Literacy practices of clubwomen not only created many of the preconditions for professionalized English studies but also embodied and enacted many of the differences between the amateur and professional; between sacralized/canonical and non-canonical texts; between pedagogies emphasizing “difficulty” and those fostering accessibility; between institutionally sanctioned and community-developed composition and interpretation (247).

Finally, Gere emphasizes how women’s clubs reshaped the idea of the feminine, a perception which lasted well past the times of the clubs. As she had in her CCCC address, Gere offers a clear “rewriting of the narrative” for these groups of women as well as their importance to literacy studies. Within composition, we most often relate only to the work done within or about the classroom; Gere’s connection with people and literacy outside the classroom allows composition to broaden the ideas of literacy and our role in it.

Gere has been studying and writing about such social connections through much of her career. In *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications* (1987), she suggests that names such as Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, or Donald Murray are most often associated with collaborative writing work, which is also thought to have started in

classrooms. However, she points out that, in fact, such writing groups have been present outside of classrooms since the 18th century, a point she had argued in her previously discussed texts. In *Writing Groups*, Gere devotes the first chapter to the history of writing groups in academic institutions, beginning with college literary societies in the 18th century, which were heavily influenced by libraries and faculty participants. The societies continued into the 19th century, with influences shifting to originate in fraternities and in literary societies or writers' clubs, such as at the University of Iowa and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. Finally, Gere covers the college classroom in the 20th century, ranging from the ideas of Macrorie and Bruffee as well as other current theorists and relates this history to that of writing groups in secondary school classrooms (from 1880). She also connects this history to the importance of the National Writing Project to secondary school work, along with curricular changes in elementary schools. Gere then transitions to writing groups outside the academic institution—again, the extracurriculum, including books groups and clubs. Overall, Gere notes that “writing groups have existed for more than two hundred years, but the continuing ‘discovery’ of them demonstrates the extent to which they have remained on the edges of educational consciousness” (“Writing Groups” 52).

Gere acknowledges that many theories have potential impact on the concept of a “social definition of writing,” but she works specifically with the theories of collaborative learning and of language development. She discusses chronologically the changing views of the author, beginning with the author as solo-performer in the 18th century and tracing this forward to later influences upon the concept of “author,” including industrialization and anti-alienation. Along with changed perceptions of writing in literary theories,

particularly those influenced by Terry Eagleton, Gere traces the roots of the social aspects of writing in composition, such as in the work of Mina Shaughnessy, Sondra Perl, and Elaine Maimon. She briefly discusses other theories to which composition has turned to gain a social understanding of knowledge, including philosophy (Richard Rorty, drawing on Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Kuhn) and anthropology (Geertz) (72). After illustrating how exploratory language is used in writing groups, Gere notes that composition has seen a shift in viewpoint toward defining writing as a possible collaborative process rather than as only a solo venture; this change has occurred partly because of the use of writing groups. This shift in focus from solo to collaborative writing has had rippling ramifications in the classroom and small groups outward to all levels of publishing. An additional consequence of this shift toward the collaborative has been a change in the meaning of “learning.” To illustrate this, Gere explains that “learning, when conceived in collaborative terms, assumes a socially derived view of knowledge and opposes a fixed and hierarchical one” (75), a definition that had been predominant prior to the proliferation of writing groups (and a definition which, admittedly, is still alive and well in parts of academe).

Gere next explores theories of language development. She first discusses Piaget’s theory as the “most widely accepted” theory, noting that it comes out of “Cartesian epistemology, as demonstrated by its separation of individual and society, its description of development as a hierarchical progression, its focus on the nature of individual thought, and its characterization of knowledge as a fixed entity” (77). Following a discussion of composition theorists who follow this individualist view of language (Moffett, Emig, Britton, Flower), Gere turns to Vygotsky’s theory of language, noting

that it is more interactional than Piaget's, and thus more helpful in understanding collaborative groups. She asserts:

When language is perceived as a social construct central to knowing—as Vygotsky claims—then writing groups become essential: essential because learning to write means learning to use the language of a given community, and writing groups provide a forum in which individuals can practice and internalize this language (96).

Gere finally focuses to the implications and practical considerations of these ideas. In terms of practice, Gere chooses not to offer a single “formula” for how writing groups may be run, such as a prescribed number and demographics of participants, the material to be given for response, or the pacing and amount of teacher intervention in a group. Instead, she explains a variety of approaches taken by groups she discussed previously in this work, all of which were successful regardless of the particular stance taken to the work. Gere does suggest three general categories of possible collaborative experiences: “autonomous, semi-autonomous and non-autonomous,” which vary depending upon the “locus and degree of authority” (100). That is, an instructor may choose to completely control the workshop, thus creating a non-autonomous environment; she may provide some scaffolding which also allows student input—a semi-autonomous environment; or she may choose to allow students to create their own autonomous collaborative experience. Each of these decisions is made based upon how the people might interact, including the instructor's particular vision of her authority in the classroom, ranging from completely teacher-centered to completely student-centered. In most classrooms, groups are either semi-autonomous or non-autonomous, with some

authority still resting with the instructor. Within either type of these classroom groups, Gere discusses several decisions instructors can make which impact the success of the collaborative groups, such as working to create a supportive environment and teaching students to work and respond well in groups. Additionally, the *commitment* of the teacher to the group idea has clear consequences, as she must work to create “clear and appropriate” (108) tasks which are “appropriate to the group’s level of functioning” (109). Although she clarifies the role of the instructor in the group, Gere also suggests that “when participants are adequately prepared and tasks [are] clear and appropriate, writing groups function best with little interference from outsiders” (111). Finally, after groups have completed this work, Gere asserts that a “debriefing” of groups is necessary to evaluate the success of the collaborative effort so that they may continue to work together effectively.

Finally, Gere shows how “the theoretical implications of writing groups . . . extend into an understanding of literacy—its meaning, purposes, and development” (113). In this chapter, Gere coalesces ideas she has explored in each of the earlier chapters, explaining how the act of collaborative work creates new meaning for its participants, and how, in turn, that new meaning allows the collaborative work to happen.

To further the academic usefulness of this text, Gere includes two bibliographies of writing group scholarship. The first bibliography lists works chronologically, beginning in 1880 and extending to 1985, just before the book’s publication, with each entry given one or more basic headings regarding the themes of that source; the second bibliography offers a list of works consulted, beyond the works she cited in the text.

I have covered this work extensively, partly because writing groups, both in and out of the classroom, have been a major area of interest and publishing for Gere, and perhaps the issue for which she is most well known. Writing itself is an intensely personal activity—one of the reasons why most composition teachers use some form of peer reading in their courses: to help student writers gain distance on the work they do, thus more firmly helping them to broaden their sense of personal literacy.

Composition/Rhetoric and English Studies

In our interview, Gere defined her main research agenda as literacy, wherever those sites of literacy may be enacted (such as in the group work noted above), including the field of postsecondary composition/rhetoric and, more broadly, English Studies, both secondary and post-secondary. Gere contributed “Practicing Theory/Theorizing Practice” to the collection *Balancing Acts: Essays on the Teaching of Writing in Honor of William F. Irmscher* (1991) (who was chair of the English department while she taught at the University of Washington). Here she turns to the familiar debate of composition’s turns toward theory as well as professionalizing and away from practice as a way of gaining respect for the field. These apparently opposing viewpoints, Gere argues, “ha[ve] created an ever-expanding division between theory and practice” (112). Gere notes that composition’s move toward a field unto itself rather than remaining an extension of literature, a move that has been made through “professionalization, publication, and graduate training in composition studies” (112), is largely positive. However, she elucidates several reasons how this also may have negative implications for the field’s direction. For example, even with such specialization increasing, Gere argues that “the numbers of students requiring instruction dictate that it will never be possible for all

writing classes to be taught by someone with graduate work in composition studies” (113). Additionally, Gere views professionalism as a separation of theory and practice, and with the field increasingly trying to raise its status in the academy, theory is often privileged. Teacher research is one way to counter this theory dominance, but for such research to create a true balance to theory, it must “[move] beyond issues of method and [consider] the underlying epistemology” (116). To illustrate this, Gere uses ideas from Jerome Bruner to explain how positivistic concepts of knowledge have dominated both universities and the professionalization of the field of composition. If we wish to move beyond the split between theory and practice, we must “think of our research in terms of social constructivism; this will lead us away from the divisions and dichotomies between theory and practice and instead toward ‘theorizing about practice and practicing theory’” (121), which Gere hopes to illustrate through her exploration in this article; that is, we must be cautious that professionalization does not include too much emphasis on theory, but we must also allow that theory to interact with the pedagogical explorations. Although the article was published in 1991 and increasingly more graduate programs offer comp/rhet specialization, her concern with the practice/theory division is still discussed in composition today.

Gere continued an exploration of this division through the anthology she edited, *Into the Field: Sites of Composition* (1993). Gere frames this volume as addressing the importance of the text’s intended metaphor, “restructuring,” in deciding how the included essays relate composition with other disciplines. She clarifies that the book is not based on the more familiar “bridge-building” metaphor, which might imply “simple appropriations in which the boundaries of both disciplines remain undisturbed” (1).

Instead, the collection is about “restructuring,” which “connotes radical realignments and a critique of the disciplines being restructured, and . . . suggests that change, disruption, and even challenges to prevailing knowledge emerge from interdisciplinary relations”

(1). Gere contends that for much of the history of composition studies, other disciplines have been explored in the bridge-building way, appropriating from fields such as education, psychology, cognitive psychology, linguistics, literature, and rhetoric (1-2).

This has worked when composition is considered as “an applied field only” (3).

However, the contributors in this volume deal with both application and theory, and this requires interacting and “creat[ing] new perspectives on the field at the same time that [the essays] introduce new terms to the discussion of composition. These terms include reconceptualizing the discipline, deconstructing received boundaries, and reconstructing relations between theory and application” (3). This anthology format, of practice and theory informing one another across disciplines, allows for the authors of the essays to find common ground and even to express contradictions with one another.

In *Writing and Learning: A Rhetoric Handbook* (1985), a textbook focused mostly on practice, Gere again addresses the importance of theory in the composition classroom. Gere distinguishes between “learning to write” and “writing to show learning,” as well as the difference between “training” and “education.” She illustrates her point with a short anecdote about a guide dog who is trained to do more than the usual “dog tricks” of sitting up and rolling over, but instead is educated to know that he should stop at the edge of a hole so his owner won’t fall in. Gere uses this analogy to define learning as “a lifelong process of educating rather than training,” and presents

writing as “a series of choices rather than as rules that must be followed slavishly” (xi).

The textbook has spanned through three editions, with the final edition published in 1991.

In 1990, Gere published *The Active Reader: Composing in Reading and Writing* (with Jeffrey Carroll, a former dissertation advisee). Significant about this reader is the way in which the readings and readers interplay differently within the usual definitions of the terms “composing” and “text.” The authors contend that, like writing, reading is an act of composing, as readers are continually constructing meaning as they read, and therefore, “the composing of reading aids the composing of writing” (xii). Second, the readings presented move beyond the usual literary canon—an important distinction for a reader published in 1990. Some authors included are quite familiar—Shakespeare, Swift, and Woolf—but the readings also include the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen, a tale from the Igbo people, and the description of an Indian vision quest. Finally, the “texts” here are not just traditional prose: cartoons, photographs, maps, and house plans are mixed into each thematic section. The reader remained in its first edition, but the spirit of expanding the definition of text remains a current theme in composition, as illustrated in the increasing interest in multimodal practices.

Teacher Education

From the time of her Master’s studies and employment as a secondary teacher, Gere has remained active in the research of writing in secondary schools. The volume *Making American Literatures in High School and College* (2001), which Gere edited with Peter Shaheen, is a part of the *Classroom Practices in Teaching English* series for NCTE. The nineteen essays in the collection address five subject areas: how American literature anthologies are typically collected, how students learn about American lit as

well as what students' lives reveals about the literature; the use of popular culture, maps, and technology, and the teaching of literature in middle schools; ways that differing pieces can be used together; and how professional learning about literature in the classroom takes place. In introducing the first section, "A Gathering of Flowers: Making American Literature Anthologies," Gere begins with a reflection her junior year in high school in 1961 and receiving her English A anthology. She notes that "many classes rely heavily, if not exclusively, on anthologies," and, therefore, one of her goals in this particular text is to consider and contradict how American literature is presented through those anthologies. She poses the following questions and considers some of their implications:

How do the entailments of Faulkner's estate contribute to the fact that "A Rose for Emily" is his most frequently anthologized selection? What does it mean for a Native American student to see American Indian literatures represented only by traditional Iroquois poetry (and that in translation), with no contemporary texts and no texts by writers from other tribes, such as, say, Joy Harjo or Sherman Alexie? Anthologies don't just determine which selections students read; they also shape the ways their texts are read. This work also includes visual texts, a connection to the multimodality being explored today.

Language and Reflection: An Integrated Approach to Teaching English (1992), written with Colleen Fairbanks, Alan Howes, Laura Roop (a former student), and David Schaafsma, is a textbook for students new to education as well as a reminder for experienced teachers. In the introduction, the authors explain, "This book asks you to

examine your beliefs about language, the beliefs of other educators, and the implications of those beliefs for English classes,” with the overall hope that studying this text will help readers “find [their] own place in the world of teaching . . . [and] introduce [them] to the places where teachers play out their professional lives” (v-vii). The text is (again) a combination of theory and practice, including chapters on theories of teaching English as well as practical exercises, aimed at helping teachers both reflect on their practice as well as engage with the included theories. With discussions of unit plans and daily plans, Gere and the other authors provide a framework for teachers as well as possibilities for specific assignments tailored toward particular works (*The Scarlet Letter*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and several others) and specific grade levels. The actual examples are directed toward the needs of secondary teachers, particularly focusing on works that may be required reading in public schools and using exercises and examples with a slightly more juvenile approach (line-drawn cartoons, for example); however, the discussions of theory, the social dimensions of teaching, and even the models of reflective work make this text a possible resource for postsecondary comp/rhet instructors.

Writing on Demand: Best Practices and Strategies for Success (2005, with Leila Christenbury and Kelly Sassi, another former student) is also a textbook aimed mostly toward helping secondary teachers, specifically in assisting their students with the skills needed to write well on demand, including high-stakes testing such as the SAT, ACT, and AP exams. The authors explain, though, that in addition to these formal timed essays, they believe most academic writing is, in fact, writing on demand. Furthermore, their underlying assumptions for the book are that “good writing and writing on demand are not contradictory, assessment is an integral part of effective writing instruction, writing

prompts can be approached rhetorically, close reading fosters good writing, and criteria for evaluation belong in the classroom [that is, not kept from students]” (5-6). The authors provide a historical context for the field of writing, including writing on demand and writing as a process. They then discuss the “rhetoric of prompts and assignments” and ways of helping students to understand assignments, including how teachers can effectively use model essays to help students become more proficient with close reading and analysis. From this holistic look at the essay, the authors turn toward methods of teaching the careful construction of effective sentences. The final two chapters discuss writing assessment, including the use of rubrics and several key terms related to assessment, and then a chapter directly addressing “success with writing ACT, SAT, AP, and Essay Exams.”

Although this text is aimed at secondary school teachers, it is also a valuable resource for postsecondary teachers. Most often, we do not make connections between postsecondary and secondary levels, either personally or theoretically; in fact, both sides are often more apt to blame one another for some of the writing problems students face. Working toward change with these connections may help us to solve some of the difficult transition issues that writers face as they enter college. Across what is often considered a dividing line between secondary and postsecondary work, Gere continues to focus on increasing academic literacy in students.

The Personal, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and American Indian Literacy

Gere’s most personal connections continue to be a topic of her research and writing, as with her daughter Cindy, which I will discuss shortly. In general, though, Gere has reflected on how such personal issues have not always been easy topics for public

writing. In “Politics of the Personal” (2001), a roundtable-in-print with Deborah Brandt, Ellen Cushman, Anne Herrington, Richard Miller, Victor Villanueva, Min-Zhan Lu, and Gesa Kirsch, Gere discusses how she learned early on to be silent about her private life in the academy, especially about mentioning that her husband is a Presbyterian minister. Even more clearly, Gere began to see a strong taboo behind speaking about religion or spirituality; she argues, “It is more acceptable to detail the trauma of rape or abuse than to recount a moment of religious inspiration” (47). Although she believes feminist theory has helped to make room for spirituality in the academy, she knows that it is far from accepting the discussion of spiritual or religious experiences.

Gere also explores another aspect of allowing students to speak the personal: that of letting students *not* write of the personal, in “Revealing Silence: Storying Our Lives Against the Grain” (2001). Gere suggests a reconceptualization of silence so it becomes another part of the continuum of speech rather than the opposite of speech. For many students who have learned the politics of the personal and the ways in which self-disclosure is valued in personal writing, they have felt pressured to reveal experiences they would rather not, or they have simply fabricated what they see as valued by their teachers. Gere argues that students should be allowed to maintain their silence rather than falsely fulfilling a requirement with which they may be uncomfortable.

Gere’s roles as a scholar and educator in composition and English Studies are fairly well known to most in comp/rhet. Less familiar, though, is her work based on her very personal understanding of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), a more severe form of the effects on a spectrum referred to as Fetal Alcohol Effects, or FAE. FAS and FAE disorders manifest as a group of symptoms, including learning and social difficulties, and

physical symptoms such as problems with hearing, speech, and even heart deformities. As I would learn more about in our interview, Gere and her husband adopted a 3½ year-old-daughter, Cindy, in 1971, a member of the Athabaskan tribe in the Yukon. Within a short time of Cindy entering their family, her several problems with learning and attention span became apparent; in 1977, she was finally diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Effects, with the severity approaching Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. This was an almost unknown condition at that time. Gere approached the difficult manifestations of this through research and speaking at FAE/FAS events, and through writing about the difficulties of FAS/FAE, including co-authoring with Cindy.

“Cindy’s Story: FAE and College” is a part of the anthology *Fantastic Antone Succeeds! Experiences in Educating Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome* (1993). The piece gives a much fuller and quite moving account of Cindy’s story than we were able to cover in the interview. Gere begins with Cindy’s graduation from high school with awards and honors, with the usual invocation of the proud mother and father looking on. However, Gere then traces back through the many grueling steps that brought them to that point. Cindy’s Fetal Alcohol Effect became particularly apparent when they enrolled her for a second year in kindergarten. Language skills and math were constant points of struggle for Cindy throughout school, and while at first Gere held back in any intervention on Cindy’s behalf, she learned over the years to be completely comfortable with the role of impassioned advocate. At the time of her diagnosis, few support systems were available for children with FAS/FAE, and Cindy was shuttled from one resource room to another and one school to another as the family sought out the best facilities for her growth.

It was not easy in coming, but Cindy made it through high school, learned to drive, and held down part-time jobs. Always gifted with art and spatial reasoning, she attended the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, and later, the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe. Gere and her husband had been unfailingly supportive in Cindy identifying with her roots as a Native American, buying books, art, and music, and taking her to powwows. Eventually Cindy moved from “I don’t like being Indian” to embracing it fully. She has been a featured speaker at FAS/FAE conferences and because she was diagnosed so early in the study of the disorder, she is often the oldest diagnosed child there. As Gere wrote, “Although Cindy’s lifetime sentence of FAE imposes many burdens, the perseveration that sometimes made her an annoying child makes her an unusually tenacious woman” (68). The piece is followed by several brightly colored reproductions of Cindy’s acrylic paintings.

In 1998, Gere and Cindy wrote an article together, “Living with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAS/FAE).” Each woman alternates in telling a part of the narrative (with Gere transcribing Cindy’s oral story). Gere describes the difficulties and joys she and her husband faced in Cindy’s growing up, being diagnosed, and moving forward in her life. Interspersed with this is Cindy’s voice giving her perspective on her life with her disability. Cindy begins her first section, “I am being suffocated by alcohol. Throughout my entire life it’s been this way and it will always be this way” (401). Cindy tells of her struggles in day-to-day life, such as continually losing her keys; relates the strength she draws from understanding her Native American heritage; and reveals the misunderstandings she has faced from people who don’t believe that she has a disability because she “looks normal.” In her next section, Gere also addresses how disabilities that

are not physically apparent are overlooked, noting that we tend to connect disabilities most particularly with an ugly appearance, and Cindy is quite beautiful. In spite of the many ways she has helped Cindy over the years, she also comments that Cindy has given her many insights, especially into the visual world, which she tends to not notice in favor of the verbal. Gere also explains that understanding Cindy has helped her to be a better teacher, as she now designs assignments around only verbal methods toward understanding writing, such as more “hands on” techniques and the incorporation of service learning. The article ends in Cindy’s voice, reflecting on the Native belief that decisions must be made in terms of how they might affect someone seven generations from now. Through speaking about her experience with FAS/FAE, Cindy hopes to reach that seventh generation and provide them with hope; through her disability, she realizes that she is able to be a healer to those who also face it.

Gere’s life with Cindy has continued to be one of both struggle and triumph. With the article as a starting place, the two of them had started a book, a two-voiced memoir, tentatively titled *Woman of the King Salmon*. For the work, Gere had recorded Cindy’s contributions and then transcribed them into the book, with her own memoir as the other voice. As she told me in our interview, after a crisis with Cindy, Gere realized she would not be able to publish it and called the publisher to cancel the book. Her heartbreak was clear when she said, “So, I have it sitting on my shelf, the book that will never be published. It’s the best thing I ever wrote.”

Combining her growing understanding of the American Indian with her own work on education and literacy, Gere published in 2005 two articles examining the history of American Indian teachers. In “Indian Heart/White Man’s Head: Native-American

Teachers in Indian Schools, 1880-1930,” Gere first discusses the history of government-operated Native-American schools, noting that while the recorded history of these schools is partial, the accounts of Native-American teachers is even more limited. Gere traces the history of several teachers back from before the predominance of government schools, exploring their contributions to Indian education and speculating on why their work has been largely ignored in education scholarship. Through exploring the individual lives and contributions of several Native-American teachers, Gere seeks to begin a more comprehensive history of this section of American education.

Picking up on the life of Angel DeCora, one of the teachers she profiles in “Indian Heart/White Man’s Head,” Gere discusses the talent for art common in many Native Americans. The article’s title, “An Art of Survivance: Angel DeCora at Carlisle” refers to a term, “survivance . . . used by Gerald Vizenor to describe the American Indian capacity to combine survival with resistance” (649). Gere explores the perception of this art through an idea DeCora stated in different forms at several speaking engagements: “There is no doubt that the young Indian has a talent for the pictorial art, and the Indian’s artistic conception is well worth recognition, and the school-trained Indians of Carlisle are developing it into possible use that it may become [their] contribution to American art” (649). Taking each of these main statements, Gere reviews the history of Native-American art in the canon of American art, finally insisting that this art must be viewed outside of the ethnographic realm in which it is most often placed and instead be seen in the aesthetic realm, as is most other art. Gere’s work with researching Native-American education and art seems a clear connection to her daughter, Cindy, although she does not mention this directly in the text. In a variety of ways, Gere has been able to not just find

room for the personal in her writing, but has used it to contribute to scholarship both within and beyond composition/rhetoric.

Interview: A Conversation with Anne Ruggles Gere

As I drove through the shady, tree-lined streets of Kirkwood, Missouri, edged with modest but beautiful houses, I concentrated on finding the correct address without the benefit of large campus signs to direct me. Although I had already interviewed eight of my participants at this point, I still felt a bit breathless. In so many of those previous interviews, the name “Anne Gere” came up as an exemplar, a role model, a true force in the field of composition. As much as I looked forward to learning why she seemed so respected, I also watched my shaking hands retrieve my equipment from the back of the car. But before I could finish gathering my bags, Anne stepped out the front door and offered to help me carry any equipment, rather than waiting for me to ring the bell, a generous gesture that immediately helped to soothe my quaking nerves. As I would find later to be also true of her personality, Anne’s home is beautiful and gracious, but not overdone; hardwood floors gleamed softly, and the living and dining rooms and kitchen I could see from the entry were decorated tastefully with wood furniture and warm colors. Anne’s soft voice radiated welcome, and the face I had seen in dust jacket pictures—beautiful, ageless skin, high cheekbones, brown hair in a tasteful bob—smiled at me with encouragement. Within moments, I felt relaxed and comfortable with her, and we decided to set up at the large, oak dining room table for our interview—a spot that made perfect sense, considering the kitchen tables she discusses in her Chair’s address. With her year-old golden retriever, Grover, brimming with still-puppy energy behind his “child gate”

contributing occasional whimpers and scratching noises to our tape, Anne and I began to talk.

Childhood and Family

Anne grew up in northern New Hampshire, the “kid who would go to the library and get 12 books out because that was as many as the librarian would let me take out at one time.” With those books, she said, “[I would] go home and read. We had a big, old front porch, and I would sit there in my rocking chair . . . read all summer.” Her father worked for a community company called Public Service New Hampshire, and her mother was an elementary school teacher as well as a music teacher and the organist at their church. In the small, mostly poor town, her mother was sometimes called “the cultural center of northern New Hampshire” because, Anne explained, “She directed community choruses and a lot of community stuff that brought music to people who otherwise wouldn’t have had much.” Anne’s father died when she was 13, when her younger sister was six years old, so her mother became the main parental influence in her life. When I asked her what impact her father’s death had on her, she explained that it made her “understand the strength of women in a different way”:

Because my mother then . . . she just kept on going. I mean . . . my mother is 5’1” or 5 feet tall, but an indomitable little soul. I think that I had a model for what it meant to be a strong woman. Although, she was not socially. She would walk into the room and you would never notice her. She’s this little, tiny, kind of mousy person, but inside there was this core of strength that I saw up close.

Part of that strength was focused on sending her daughters to college. Although the family didn't have much money, one of Anne's earliest memories was talk of saving money for college, even though she "didn't know what college was." She indeed did, of course, go on to school, at Colby College in Maine, although she was the only student from her high school senior class to attend a liberal arts college. She started as a biology major but didn't like it, noting, "I am one of those casualties, as many women are, of being frozen out of the sciences." In spite of her love for reading and writing, she "thought that was just for fun." However, she completed an English major in 1964, and then an M.A. in English in 1967, but she was careful to note that it was in the sciences, not in English, where she started. While she was doing her intern teaching, she met her husband, Budge, who was substitute teaching at the time, and they were married in 1968. Budge was going to go in the Navy, but he had a bad back, and "the Navy threw him out in Vietnam War time." While Budge went to seminary at Dartmouth, Anne taught high school in Princeton, New Jersey. (In an interesting aside, she mentioned that she had actually taught there with Bill Cooke, one of the chairs from this time period I wasn't able to interview because of conflicts with his personal schedule and his upcoming time on leave. Anne laughed about how far back the two of them go.)

Anne and Budge have two children, but she explained, "I should say these aren't just any old kids. We were children of the '60s and adopted older minority children." In 1971, their daughter, Cindy, arrived at age 3½, and their son, Sam was 1½ when they adopted him in 1977 from Korea. They had originally hoped to adopt another Native-American child, to minimize possible confusions for Cindy, but laws had been passed during that time which disallowed White families from adopting Native-American

children. Shortly after adopting Cindy, Anne and Budge noticed she was “having difficulties.” She couldn’t learn to read, among other problems, and at first they thought it was because theirs was her fourth home and these problems came with that. The family was living in Washington at the time (Anne was teaching at the University of Washington), and after following up on a recommendation by their pediatrician, they learned that some of the earliest work on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) was being done at the University. At age seven, Cindy was diagnosed with FAS, but at that time, Anne said, “It was diagnosis-schmosis. It didn’t tell us what to do. We had to make that up . . . because she is one of the oldest FAS kids to have been diagnosed as a child.” Anne claimed that they had to be pioneers in a way with learning to help Cindy; with so little known about the disorder, they had to find ways on their own to help her. When the two children were in school, Cindy was in the resource room and Sam was in the gifted and talented program. Sam “was the gifted kid, but he was the Asian kid who didn’t want to fit the Asian norm,” Anne clarified. “His way of acting out was to do really, really badly in college,” and as an English major where she was teaching, at the University of Michigan. He did eventually graduate and now works with his English degree in a bank. “Go figure,” said Anne, but Sam is considering going back to business school. As for Cindy, she had a daughter, but Anne and Budge had full guardianship at the time we talked, so Anne was teaching full-time in Michigan, living in St. Louis, and raising a six-year-old granddaughter.

I asked her about the cross-country work arrangement, which turned out to be one of several professional arrangements driven by a family reality. She explained that she and Budge have similar jobs in many ways because they are both always reading and

writing, but the differences in the need to be “on call” is certainly apparent for a teacher and a pastor. (“When somebody dies, he’s got to be there.”) Because of this, their lives have most often been guided by where the First Presbyterian Church has placed him as a pastor. For example, in 1970, he was called to a church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Anne was having trouble finding a teaching job, largely because she had a Master’s degree and had taught at a prestigious high school, which combined to make her a more expensive hire than someone with a B.A. A friend from Princeton High School knew the chair of the English Department at University of Michigan, and she went to see him:

He offered me a receptionist job or teaching two sections of poetry, and of course I took the teaching. Big choice, right? So, I taught the two sections of poetry, and again sort of by accident, I discovered that they had this Ph.D. program in English Education. This put together all the stuff I’m interested in. I got into the program, and the rest is history. It really could have been a very different narrative.

At each step in their personal journey, Anne and Budge have figured out a way to make both of their careers work, to take care of their family, and to maintain a very strong and supportive marriage. She called him her “bulwark,” the one who held her hand as she went into the room to give her CCCC Chair address; in spite of his own busy life, Anne explained, “He’s very good at knowing when to be there and is always my biggest and best supporter.”

Education, Teaching, and Administration

While in the doctoral program at Michigan, Anne worked as a teaching assistant from 1971 to 1974. After a year of working as a research associate for the Center for

Research on Learning and Teaching, Anne took a position in 1975 at The University of Washington (Budge was able to be assigned to a church in Seattle as well). Anne called UW “the place where I sort of cut my academic teeth.”

It was a rough initiation [into academic life] because when I went to that department, I was the only woman who was both married and had small children. There were a few men who were married and had no children. There were a couple of women who had children, but they were older children. I was the only one I knew of who was scrambling around with child care and “how do you help a child” and you know all that early childhood stuff.

Eventually, other women like her came into the department, but as she had many times before, she “really had to figure out all that stuff [her]self.” She was in a group with other women from other departments (a group they called “The Other Mom”), and they exchanged advice about pre-school and day care. One year, when the public schools went on strike in the first two weeks of the University term, the group organized a house-to-house daycare, where they “put all [their] little kids in a pile and each day the kids would go to somebody else’s house.” Thinking of that experience and others like it, Anne reflected, “We really had to make it up as we were going along, and I suppose a lot of my professional life has been that: coming into situations where it wasn’t always hospitable for women and trying to figure [it] out.”

In 1987, Anne returned to the University of Michigan, where she remains as a full professor of both English and Education. When I asked how the two institutions compared, she noted:

[Initially,] they felt very similar. Charles Odegard, who had been the Dean at Michigan and went on to ultimately be the president at Washington, was president during the '50s and '60s when they were doing a lot of building, and he built [the University of Washington] in Michigan's image. It felt very similar in lots of ways. However, during that period of twelve years while the economy was really struggling . . . [in the] early '80s . . . Michigan invested in higher education. Washington did not. By the time I left, the disparity between the two English departments and indeed between the two universities had grown enormously.

Thus, she was glad to be able to return to the University of Michigan, and Budge had been able to get appointed to a church outside Ann Arbor, in Farmington Hills, which left Anne with about an hour's commute. When Budge was called to a church in St. Louis in 1998, Anne looked around for options, but decided she liked her position at the University of Michigan too much. After discussing it, she says that they thought, "Okay, we'll be a '90s couple I can commute back and forth. Lots of people do this. We've been happily married for a long time; we can make this work." On a typical week, she flies to Ann Arbor on Monday morning and is there through Wednesday. She makes appointments with students late into the evening so that she can maintain as much contact with them as possible. She recognizes, though:

Students are not as good at saying, 'I need to see you,' and they'll just come by and hope that you're there. I'm not helpful to those people, because I'm *not* there. And if I am there, I'm probably booked. And so I think that's the downside. Probably in some ways, because I'm very

conscious of my absence and regret it because that's my life, I'm probably more diligent about turning exams around quickly, responding quickly to student papers and drafts and dissertation chapters and stuff like that. I think if you were to talk to my students they would say I'm probably right up there in the top 10% of the faculty who really get back to them right away. I don't keep people waiting a month for something. I can't. I've got to just keep up with everything.

She is a part-time resident of Michigan, with an apartment that she described as kind of "cute and funky" (and which she offered to me to stay in if I were driving through Ann Arbor. The time for a stopover didn't work, but the offer was certainly tempting and genuinely extended.)

Anne started this commuting arrangement before her granddaughter was born and having her in their lives and now under their guardianship has made it more challenging. However, she has figured out ways to make the situation work as well as possible. She usually is able to teach one graduate seminar per semester, but she also received a large grant from the Department of Education to work with undergraduates who are becoming teachers. She coordinates a group of graduate students to create an apprenticeship relationship with the undergrads, mentoring and preparing them to become teachers in urban and high-need schools. This allows her to stay in touch with undergraduates, which she notes she would otherwise miss. She is also involved with several dissertation committees, which she called "a big, big piece of what I do. Because when you direct a Ph.D. program like mine, jointly in English and education, there aren't very many faculty who are positioned to chair [dissertations] as I am. I don't try to take them all, but a lot of

them end up working with me. If I'm not the chair, I'm on a lot of committees." Because the grant has allowed her to buy out teaching time and she is able to work on some of it as well as responding to papers and dissertations from a distance, she has been able to handle the additional responsibility of raising a small child.

Anne has also found other ways of continuing her commitment to her work. In the previous year from our discussion, the "old girl network," as she called it, served her well. A former colleague at Washington had become the chair at St. Louis University, and she arranged for Anne to be a visiting professor for a year. She was also hired by NCTE to run a research office:

There has not been anybody on the NCTE staff who has been full time, paying attention to research and its relation to advocacy for English teachers at all levels. They've asked me to do that, and again, it's a part-time thing. They can't really afford a full-time person. I've agreed to do it for a couple of years, because I can do it from home. It will buy out another piece for me in Michigan, and so far, the folks at Michigan haven't gotten too cranky about that. The nice thing is that [with] e-mail and fax, I can be a virtual presence. And I am that. It's not that I'm not working, but it's just that I've not been physically present as much. So far, so good.

At Michigan, she has created a job group for the graduate students, which she treats like a course. She meets with any students who are going on the job market, reviews their vitae and letters, and discusses with them possible options. She believes passionately in the value of mentoring students, as she herself did not have any female

mentors in graduate school as another example of this; all of the full professors were male. (And even when the students were male, such as Victor Villanueva, her student at Washington, and Jeffrey Carroll, at Michigan, she still felt it was important for her to do what she could, often behind the scenes, for them to succeed.) Because of her own paucity in mentoring, she has tried to be a mentor to her students, particularly the women, helping them not just scholastically, but also in terms of a career. This is evident in the number of former students she has pulled in on publications. In her mentoring, Anne encourages students to

put things together [and to] think about where [they] want to be in five, six years. Put [their] work together in a way that is going to help [them] get to that place, and from that all the way through to make sure [they] get money for moving That's one of the things that I've spent a lot of energy on and take pleasure in doing because I think it is so important for people to have mentors.

Now that she is caring for a young child again, she finds more connections with her students than she otherwise might. Intimately knowing *Dora the Explorer* and *Blue's Clues* can cover a lot of distance in terms of rapport.

I asked her why she felt mentoring is continually so important to her, as her excited body language and pitch of voice clearly displayed her enthusiasm. Part of it, she feels, is rooted in her own educational beginnings. As she said, "I was a scholarship kid when I went on to graduate school. My family never had a lot of money. We were living on my mother's teacher salary. I think that there's something of that. I *know* what it is to be on the other side and to know that I was just as smart as all these other people but I

hadn't had the same advantages." But she also feels that since she was able to move out of those humble beginnings and have a good life, she feels she needs to give back:

I think I feel very privileged. I've had a very nice life in lots of ways. I've been privileged to teach at really good places where they treat teaching very well. I have a really wonderful husband and complicated family, but basically I would say I've been really privileged. I'm healthy. All that sort of stuff. You kind of look at your life and say 'Boy, I have been very, very fortunate in lots of ways.' With that I think comes a kind of responsibility. With privilege comes responsibility. That sounds a little bit noblesse oblige, more so than probably I want to sound.

However, it's clear that Anne feels it is important to give back in the ways she can. As Anne explored in some of her writing on the personal, particularly in the ways in which Christian beliefs are often marginalized, she explains that this is definitely important to her worldview: "I think that my faith is a piece. I understand the gospels to be talking about giving and stewardship, using resources so that more people benefit." With all of these forces coming together, Anne tries to live her professional life in a way that meshes with her personal viewpoints.

Experience with CCCC

Anne was very aware of CCCC early in her career at Washington because she worked with William Imscher, the organization's chair in 1979. Imscher encouraged her to become involved, and she began attending CCCC "sometime in the late 1970s." After her first years attending, she began sharing a room with Allison Gillam, a long-time friend from when they taught together at Princeton High School in the late 1960s, who

now teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. At the time of our interview, Anne said that Allison had figured out they had shared a room at CCCC together for 22 years, a story which touched me, as I have roomed with one of my own female graduate school colleagues at CCCC for the past seven years, so that the heady intellectual atmosphere at the conference can also include the feeling of a pajama party.

When the CCCC nominating committee came to Anne to suggest she run as chair, she admitted, “I was very surprised because I’ve always been this kind of hybrid person. I’ve done as much English Education as I’ve done composition studies.” Although she feels the education aspect of composition is crucial, she commented about how that aspect is often left out of the story:

My private suspicion is that it’s a kind of elitist thing. But if you go back and you read Richard Braddock and Lloyd Jones . . . so many people are from English Education backgrounds [with] methodologies straight out of education. There are many ways to look at the story. Certainly Ed Corbett and the rhetoric tradition is one piece, but that seems to be the dominant narrative. I think there is another narrative that if you look closely, there is a very strong English Education piece. The rhetoric tradition is just one way to tell the story of composition studies.

Because she was a scholar of both composition and English studies, Anne thought it would be unlikely that she would win the election, even though she had been active in NCTE. She was also running against Janice Lauer, and Anne said, “I just assumed she was the person who would be elected because she was out of the dominant position of rhetoric. . . . You know how you say ‘yes’ to stuff you think you’re never going to get.”

She laughed, but reflected on how the membership of CCCC seemed to have a different idea about what was important to have happening in the organization at the time—that is, composition over rhetoric—and she won the election.

When it came time for Anne to prepare the program, she made certain that English Education was represented, as well as an emphasis on the continuity between secondary school with college because “these kids were in high school three months ago and to ignore that experience and pretend that college is the only thing is to really miss the point.” One way she changed the program in ways that fit with her own research beliefs was to have a session chair who was a high school teacher, which was certainly out of the norm. She also changed the process of how proposals were reviewed. Prior to this, proposals were not blind reviewed. But part of her concern with this was that same “super star” system that Di Leo writes about. Anne recalled,

I had read proposals earlier before I became chair, and would see Professor Famous X would send something that was clearly dashed off in ten minutes, and some poor graduate student would send something he labored over, but the person with the name would get on the program and the poor graduate student wouldn't. It seemed to me that we weren't looking at the quality of programs much, and we needed to do that.

Instead, Anne instigated a review process which she felt was more impartial. This was only a part of her push to make CCCC less “club-y,” less centered only on a small portion of composition and more concerned with the larger picture of “the extracurricular and literacy practices outside the classroom.”

This broader approach, of course, became the focus of her chair's address. Because she was in the middle of researching *Intimate Practices*, it felt natural to her for her speech to reflect her thinking at the time and how she saw it connecting with composition. With most chairs, the preparation of the address is quite different from presenting it. I asked Anne about that time of coming out to the stage to speak:

I [have given] a lot of speeches, as you can imagine. I remember standing up and almost bursting into tears. I could see my friends sitting up front being good, supportive friends and just to look at this enormous room with all these people and all these faces that I have worked with for so many years; it was just overwhelming. They are here to hear what I have to say and they put me here purposely to do this thing. You know that line from *Charlotte's Web*—like Wilbur, I was “humble, but proud.” Whoa. This is really a big moment, and I'm proud to be here, but I was humbled by the enormity of it all.

I knew that Budge was proud of her as well, but I was curious about her mother's reaction to her being elected as a national leader in her field. She explained that the connection was much deeper than most realize; as mentioned earlier, Anne began researching women's literacy clubs partly because her mother had been in one herself. By the time Anne was elected as chair, her mother had contracted Alzheimer's disease and was at a stage of no longer recognizing her daughters. She was diagnosed at age ninety, and Anne called this her mother's “first death.” Anne began researching women's clubs because “the whole notion . . . had been very much a part of [her] childhood, and it was a way of hooking in to stay connected [with my mother] at a time when we couldn't be

connected anymore.” However, when she was elected, Anne’s sister called her to tell her that she was proud of her “because that is what [her] mother would have said.” (In retelling this, Anne warned she would not be able to say it “without weeping,” and we took a few moments away from talking so she could do just that—cry for her mother, who died about seven years after the Alzheimer’s diagnosis, and for all that the “first death” of the disease took away from her. After a time to talk a bit more about this struggle and for Anne to recollect herself, we continued talking about her time in the CCCC leadership.)

As most chairs underscored, the work on CCCC took an enormous amount of time, time which was taken from other scholarly projects they might be pursuing, with publication deadlines pushed back and ideas left unwritten until after the CCCC rotation. But Anne emphasized that she was very glad she did the work, especially because of what she learned by being chair, particularly at a time when so much was coming together between CCCC, NCTE, and English Education. She is highly complimentary of the CCCC, calling it “one of the most nimble and cutting edge organizations.” She continues:

It has remained this professional, but at the same time not heavily bureaucratized, organization because it has been leadership that has kept it going that way. I am pleased to have been part of that. I learned a lot about the field and learned to see it in a different way. When you read 1800 proposals for the program, you really have a whole field laid out before you. Although it’s a huge project—and they’ve fortunately changed the

way they do it—I wouldn't have missed that. I think that it was a good thing to have done.

When I asked for her speculation on where the field might be heading, she expressed concern that it seemed to be “going in sixteen different directions.” Beyond that, though, she wasn't sure she could definitively answer the question. When she looks at the journal (*CCC*) now, she sees so many different things happening, but noted, “I'm not saying that any one of them is the wrong direction, but what is the identity of the field is a real question. So I can't answer your question, or say it is going *here*. Clearly technology is a big piece and I think the questions of tech are more than just Computers and Composition. [There are] so many different possible directions.”

Leaving Kirkwood, Missouri

From Kirkwood, I picked up I-44 on my way to I-70 east, driving past the famous Arch, the “Gateway to the West,” and over the Mississippi river that for me has always marked the split between the western and eastern halves of the country. Anne's schedule seemed impossible to me, but she seems to take it in easy stride. During a break in our interview, Anne offered to make lunch. Had I been told a few years before that on one hot summer day, I would be eating a meal with one of composition's leading scholars, prepared by her, for me, in her home, I would have scoffed. Perhaps more poignantly, I would not have been able to predict such a simple and satisfying menu: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, carrot sticks, and milk. We sat outside at a table on the back patio, hot sunshine filtering through tall trees, with Grover jumping around, happy to have someone to throw a ball for him. Although reading her scholarship and interviewing Anne—the formal aspects of studying her—certainly taught me much about her, I had learned even

more in those in-between spaces: in seeing her books on the shelves, in eating a meal with her, in laughing together at her dog's antics. Again, I was glad I had chosen to interview my participants in person; I had indeed found the humanity in this work. Finding that helped me to understand exactly why so many of my participants cited Anne as a source of inspiration, both professionally and personally: while her knowledge and experience have not been easy to attain, she offers both to those around her with gracious ease.

Since we spoke, Budge has returned to a church in the Ann Arbor area, and so Gere, as a busy teacher, administrator, wife, and grandmother, can put in more time at her office (and her home) than toward her frequent flyer account. I am certain she has responded to this newest change with gratitude and grace.

“The learning process is something you can incite, literally incite, like a riot.

And then, just possibly, hopefully, it goes home, or goes on.”

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

CHAPTER 4

LILLIAN BRIDWELL-BOWLES

Louisiana State University

In the geographical order of my trip, I visited Nell Ann Pickett in Mississippi and then proceeded to Louisiana to meet with Lillian Bridwell-Bowles. The route between the two was an easy drive down I-50 and then west on I-10. As much as Mississippi had felt like “Deep South,” dropping down into the denser haze of heat and humidity of Baton Rouge clarified the extremes of climate in this country. I was curious about Lillian Bridwell-Bowles. She had been at the University of Minnesota for 22 years—a different climate, indeed; but in January of 2004, she moved to Louisiana State University. When I learned of this move—in fact, when Keith Gilyard told me at the 2004 CCCCs—we both did that head shake that signaled we didn’t understand such a radical shift so far into her career. I had lived in the South, and I wondered about the huge differences in the two areas; even the switch from Minnesota winters to the humidity of Baton Rouge seemed daunting to me. I had read that Bridwell-Bowles grew up in the South, but after 22 years, what had drawn her back? And what was once home, did it still seem like “home” to her?

At the hotel on the morning I was to meet Bridwell-Bowles at Louisiana State University, I started the day at one of the groups of tables set aside for the breakfasting patrons. Instead of reading a paper or checking back over my notes, I began people

watching. The desk workers at the hotel were all younger African American men or women, busily answering phones and checking out patrons. The cleaning and breakfast stocking staff, all dressed in dark blue uniforms, were older African American women. The boss was a large white man, his tie floating along his protruding belly, unable to reach his belt. He took his bossing seriously, and consistently criticized one of the cleaning women for not stocking the breakfast bar quickly enough. When I returned for orange juice and coffee, this particular worker was also the one who was the kindest to me, cheerfully calling me “hon” and “sweetie,” asking if I had all I needed. After I sipped my last cup of notoriously bad hotel coffee, which always seems to be too weak or strong enough to be thick (as in this case), I thought about this scenario and about Bridwell-Bowles own published perceptions about of racism in the South. I know that many academics often move to at least two or three institutions over their careers, but Bridwell-Bowles’ move to Louisiana from Minnesota seemed such a large change. I wondered about the comfort she had found there.

Scholarly Works: A Partial Overview

Computers and Composition

Bridwell-Bowles graduated with an Ed.D. from the University of Georgia in 1979. Her dissertation, *Revising Processes in Twelfth Grade Students' Transactional Writing*, is the first from this group of CCCC chairs to focus on composition instead of literature; she published a version of her dissertation a year later in *Research in the Teaching of English*. In her earliest scholarly work, Bridwell-Bowles explores issues of the composing process. Bridwell-Bowles (as Lillian Bridwell) and Richard Beach edited *New Directions in Compositions Research* (1984), the first volume in *The Guilford Press*

Perspectives in Writing, edited by Linda Flower and John Hayes. Bowles and Beach note that many in academia haven't a clear understanding of what "composition research" is, but for this volume, they define such research as "the investigation of writing behaviors, cognitive processes during composing, and the ways in which these behaviors and cognitive processes interact with written products and their context" (1). They delineate this from literary research in that composition focuses on the actual product of writing; furthermore, compositionists are concerned with writers of all ages and abilities, rather than the luminaries usually studied in literature. Because many other disciplines have also studied writers' performance (cognitive psychologists, linguists, educators), the authors suggest that composition is "not a unique discipline but a hybrid of disciplines" (1).

Bridwell-Bowles and Beach contextualize the volume through an overview of the history of composition through the 1960s and '70s, and they call for future composition studies to take into account a wider variety of variables than researchers had before, including "not isolating writing form the social, political, and psychological context in which it occurs" (6). Noting the complexity of the field, the authors acknowledge that this volume may not be complete, but that it can "serve as a kaleidoscope of new directions" (13). The date of this work, 1984—arguably in the center of modern composition research—allows an interesting look into the concerns of that time period. Each of the text's four sections includes a brief introduction: "Research Methods," "The Composing Process," "The Writing Situation," and "The Instructional Context." The twenty articles are authored by some of the major figures in composition research, including Linda Flower, John Hayes, Lester Faigley, Stephen Witte; Marilyn Cooper, Thomas Newkirk, Lee Odell, Michael M. Williamson, and Anne Ruggles Gere, closing with Bridwell-

Bowles's article (with Paula Reed Nancarrow and Donald Ross), "The Writing Process and the Writing Machine: Current Research on Word Processors."

"The Writing Process and the Writing Machine" is a partial reflection of research being conducted then at the University of Minnesota (UMN). Bridwell-Bowles and her co-authors contend that while research on writing processes has increased tremendously and that research on microcomputers has also grown, the two fields have not come together in meaningful ways. To support their point for this article, the authors refer to UMN's research regarding the effects of word processors with both experienced and inexperienced writers, and computer-assisted instruction (CAI). The school had in place a three-year plan for to produce research and instructional materials from the research. The authors first explain that while software is available to guide students through invention questions, the capabilities of the computer are not being fully used, largely because "we tend to think of microcomputers primarily as intelligent terminals, not as text processors" (385). Following an overview of CAI research to that time, the authors suggest plans for computer-assisted instruction, ways in which word processors can help (or hinder) writing for disciplines requiring special formatting, and the use of word processors in the classroom. The authors conclude that writing instructors must work more closely with computer researchers to create suitable uses for CAI in the classroom. Without this step, "the word processor will become not a valuable heuristic tool, but just one more gimmick in computer-aided instruction for writers" (395).

Evidence of the prominent place of Bridwell-Bowles's research in CAI is clear in her article "Designing Research on Computer Assisted Writing," published in a special edition of the journal *Computers and Composition* in November of 1989. This issue

“[brings] together an outstanding collection of articles to explore the wide range of issues connected with creating and maintaining computer-supported writing facilities, programs, and classrooms” (Hawisher and Selfe 5). The goal of the issue, guest edited by Isaiah Smithson, is to bring together major ideas from “the first decade of computer use in the classroom.” In that vein, Bridwell-Bowles critiques the work and research methodologies of five major researchers in the field of computers and composition, including herself (at the editors’ request), Gail Hawisher, Helen Schwartz, Geoffrey Sirc, and Ann Duin. The article also serves as a history of CAI and composition, covering the major issues that have been explored: the effect of computers on the writing process and on improvement in writing; the creation and use of software for writers; and the use of local area networks (LAN) for collaborative writing. Bridwell-Bowles addresses the major research in each area, and concludes by asking several questions that need to be addressed in the future of computer-assisted writing instruction:

How can we use computers as a catalyst for positive social and political change in our writing classrooms and our educational system? How can we use computers to help us address the marginalization and silencing of individuals because of race, age, gender, handicap? How can we use computers to promote increasingly egalitarian exchanges among groups of people within our classrooms who have different levels of privilege and power? How can we use computers to promote both collaborative activities among writers and to support dissent in its most productive forms? (88)

These articles are a few of several works Bridwell-Bowles would publish on computers and writing. Several articles came directly from her UMN research, such as “Composing and Computers: Case Studies of Experienced Writers” (1987), “Writing with Computers: Implications from Research for the Language Impaired” (1987), and “Computers in Reading and Writing” (1991). She also published *Word Processors and the Writing Process: An Annotated Bibliography* (1984) and the follow-up, “A Selected Bibliography on Computers in Composition: An Update” (1987). Considering the time period in which these works were published, Bridwell-Bowles is considered to be one of the founders of the field of computer-assisted instruction. She continued her interest in this area through researching the impact of multimodal education and Web 2.0 issues on composition, such as in her article “Not Just Words Any More: Multimodal Communication across the Curriculum,” (2009) written with Karen E. Powell and Tiffany Walter Choplin. After an overview of a history of technological changes in teaching, from Marshall McLuhan to the collaborative learning possibilities of blogs, wikis, and other Web 2.0 tools, the authors explore LSU’s Communication Across the Curriculum (CxC) program and the ways in which it encourages students toward multimodal composing in a variety of disciplines. In several recent conference presentations, Bridwell-Bowles (and several co-authors) have investigated how writing and technical communication can expand and enhance the education of engineering students at LSU. As one of the founding researchers of composition and computer-assisted instruction, Bridwell-Bowles may well have discontinued that research at some point to move on to the other themes she explores. However, she has chosen to “move with the times”—as a scholar and an administrator—by continuing to explore the impact

of all technology on communication. Her early influence in this area of the field continues to be substantial today.

Diversity and Discourses

In her 1994 CCCC's address, "Freedom, Form, Function: Varieties of Academic Discourse," Bridwell-Bowles begins with three short quotes: the familiar "Hold fast to dreams" stanza of Langston Hughes; Adrienne Rich on writing, "As long as our language is inadequate, our vision remains formless, our thinking and feeling are still running in the old cycles, our process may be 'revolutionary,' but [it will not be] transformative"; and Hélène Cixous's statement, "I do not want to tell a story to someone's memory" (46). She uses these quotations to frame her speech, she explains, because "in my opinion, the most significant issue facing our profession as we move into the twenty-first century is embodied in these quotations: That our language and our writing should be adequate enough to make our dreams, our visions, our stories, our thinking, and our actions not just revolutionary but transformative" (46.) As Bridwell-Bowles sees it, "revolutionary" thinking might make things happen, but truly "transformative" rhetoric will change the way people see the world, thus effecting change at a deeper level. Rather than wanting to revolutionize her students toward doing something different, her hope is to inspire them to change their thinking by bringing "passions and realms of transformation" into the classroom. Bridwell-Bowles believes we need to make our classrooms places where not only the usual academic writing takes place but also places where "the power of communication to change things, to transform" (47) can happen, partly because of her own younger rebellious spirit, which she has written about and which we would discuss more fully.

Bridwell-Bowles recounts some of her experience in her “lily-white” world (appropriate to her nickname of Lilly, she explains) and the way in which her literacy experiences often happened outside the classroom (as Anne had discussed in the previous year’s address). For Bridwell-Bowles, her “real literacy education was about what was happening in the streets” (49), not just the classroom, with experiences like the interruption of classes with news of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. Invoking again the words of others—Countee Cullen, Joan Baez, and Walt Whitman—she shows how she less conventional sources informed her sense of literacy, realizing that “none of the important or meaningful writing I have every produced happened as a result of a writing assignment given in a classroom,” in spite of good teachers, in spite of being the valedictorian of her high school, and in spite of many *A* papers in the classroom (50). That meaningful writing came when she researched her own passions and responded to the world she encountered outside the formal constraints of education. She wants to change that, however, and calls for ways “that we might *more often* make our classrooms places that connection with the world outside, the here and now” (51).

Bridwell-Bowles suggests that part of why we haven’t yet altered our classrooms so significantly is because we have changed widely and rapidly as a profession. We have explored many theories in connection to composition, including rhetorical, feminist, multicultural and postcolonial, post structuralism, black feminist theory, and other contemporary critical theories. She is concerned, though, that by turning to these theories to professionalize our discipline within the academy that “our professional solidarity may mask fundamental disagreements about pedagogical practices.” She questions, “Critical theory may be helping us as academics, but is it

helping our students? Has all of our transformation been more for us than for our students?” (52). She is concerned that while so many ideas have allowed wide changes in our field, these changes may not actually help our students. With so many different theories causing a splintering in the cohesiveness of comp/rhet, Bridwell-Bowles wonders if we can as a profession still “talk about a common ‘we’” (53). Bridwell-Bowles acknowledges, though, that part of this fragmentation into different theories comes from living in a complex society, in which we all manage our individually complex identities. Bridwell-Bowles suggests her own partial list of personal identities:

Baby-boomer, “white” (but with several Native American ancestors), middle-class, woman, academic with access to international conversations, middle-aged tennis player who might have been great had she started young, life partner to Rick Bowles, mother, stepmother, expatriate Southerner, Presbyterian, out-of-fashion liberal, and teacher. (54)

Because we all have such and even more complex identities, this requires multiple forms of discourse as well; if we can be aware of these changing needs, we can “model for [our students] our self-reflexive analysis of our own discourse practices” (54). She also advocates for us to not restrict our own writing to earlier, prescribed modes, but to embrace thinking such as Keith Gilyard’s *Voice of the Self: A Study of Sociolinguistic Competence*, in which he combines his own experiences with linguistic analysis. Bridwell-Bowles calls for us to embrace differences in our understanding our individual identities and practices.

Making only individual, personal changes may not be enough to change our profession, though; Bridwell-Bowles argues that compositions are divided between types

of institutions, types of contracts, and varying requirements. Some people take such varied backgrounds to mean we need more standardized requirements, partly because the result of so many differences can make for anarchy rather than democracy. Bridwell-Bowles insists that “calls for standardization often mask white, middle-class, male-dominated traditions.” She doesn’t believe that “diversity is an end in itself”—that simply creating diversity will solve the problem—but she notes that “the history of rhetoric is the conflict between those who would spell out rules for rhetorical forms vs. those who would invent new forms to construct meanings. Surely there are times and places for difference and disagreement and times and places for commonality and community” (58). She argues we need commonality in striving to help our students grow not just as writers and rhetors, but as people and citizens. Regardless of institutional background, Bridwell-Bowles hopes students will be able to “imagine something different, to see things in a new way, to think outside the boundaries of the familiar” (59)—again referring to her hope for transformation, for a new way of thinking. She closes her address with a nod to the tempered enthusiasm of her youth: “I no longer believe that I can change the world as I did when I sang along with Joan Baez, but I do believe that I can change my own discourse practices, and in so doing, I may inspire some students in my own classrooms” (60).

Bridwell-Bowles discusses this change in her own discourse practices in “Discourse and Diversity: Experimental Writing within the Academy” (1992). Arguing that composition teachers to embrace a more diverse discourse in their own writing and in their teaching, Bridwell-Bowles claims, “If we are to invent a truly pluralistic society, we must envision a socially and politically situated view of language and the creation of texts

. . . . Our language and our written texts represent our visions of our culture, and we need new processes and forms if we are to express ways of thinking that have been outside the dominant culture” (349). Because new ideas call for new terms, she suggests replacing terms such as “alternative discourses,” which she believes isn’t broad enough to allow for the expansion in thinking, or “feminist discourses,” her “sentimental favorite,” but one she recognizes can feel too exclusive. Instead, she proposes the term “diverse discourse” (350) as a more inclusive description. Allowing students to write in diverse discourses may give students the “linguistic and rhetorical flexibility” to “help [them] to write better conventional prose” (351). Bridwell-Bowles admits that she draws heavily on feminist scholarship for her own writing, but that she encourages her students to find inspiration in whatever discourses are helpful to them. Looking at feminist writers in particular, Bridwell-Bowles discusses the examples of diverse discourse in published works, including personal narrative, emotional writing, and collaborative texts, as well as texts that challenge traditional discourses of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and even composing processes. She then offers several examples of her students’ writings which challenge academic convention, experiment with forms, and add visual “text” to support verbal text. Bridwell-Bowles admits that she has more freedom to write against traditional discourses (because of her position, tenure, and experience), but that her work with her students in challenging traditional discourses has taught her as much as it has taught them.

Bridwell-Bowles explores in several publications the idea of transformation through challenging the traditional language, particularly through the idea of identity. In “Film Clips and the Master’s Tools” (1997), she alludes to an essay by Audre Lorde,

“The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” Bridwell-Bowles reflects, “I grew up in the master’s house, and I learned to use his tools very well. As I try to dismantle the house, I don’t know what cultural walls I’ll run into next. I only know that there is something deep within me that wants to demolish the racist part of myself and the schools where I work” (33). Through several autobiographical stories (many of which we covered in our interview), she reflects on leaving the south and moving to the much different, very white Midwest. She admits that she “thought then, and still occasionally think[s], that Southerners know more about social revolution than people in other parts of the country” (142). Although this seems counter-intuitive, she explains that more than those in other parts of the country, Southerners have seen more examples for racism up close; this may not result in social change for all Southerners, it may inspire more Southerners to change than those in the other part of the country who haven’t actually *seen* and, therefore, may be more able to remain complacent about it. It follows the idea of “if I don’t see it, it isn’t there.” Some Southerners may harbor a refusal to see what is right before them, but those who want to see change have first-hand knowledge of where that transformation needs to start.

Focusing on feminist rhetoric, Bridwell-Bowles and her former student, Hildy Miller, edited *Rhetorical Women: Roles and Representations* (2005); Bridwell-Bowles sent me the introduction in its draft stages to show me her most recent work. From the first line of the introduction, Bridwell-Bowles and Miller recognize the difficulty of the task they are undertaking: “Whenever writers, rhetors, historians, critics, or artists attempt to represent ‘women,’ or even ‘a woman,’ they inevitably risk being accused of missing the mark—either deliberately or unintentionally—out of misogyny or ignorance

of a range of possible vantage points and interpretations” (1). The goal of their collection is “to outline some of the major rhetorical patterns that are at work in this complicated business of representation—from describing the rhetorical perspective of self, to the positions of individual women rhetors, to whole groups of women in various periods” (1). To lay the historical groundwork of the collection, the authors discuss the works of several key theorists who introduced “new rhetorics and frameworks of feminist rhetoric”: Andrea Lundsford, Cheryl Glenn, Louise Phelps and Janet Emig, Susan Jarratt and Lynn Worsham, Krista Ratcliffe, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Sutcliffe—authors who have not just “recover[ed] and reclaim[ed] the work of women rhetors, but also “provided new frameworks for conceptualizing the work of women rhetors” (3-4). From the work of these scholars, other scholars addressed a “more specific level of cultural critique,” which was positioned more socially than previous works. These scholars include Shirley Logan, Carol Mattingly, Susan Miller, Anne Ruggles Gere, Molly Meijer Wertheimer, Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen, Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, Cinthia Gannett, and Nan Johnson (5). A final area of scholarship Bridwell-Bowles and Miller address is the “new and revised canon” for women that many theorists have explored, including JoAnn Campbell, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Michael G. Moran and Michelle Ballif, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Karen Foss, Sonja Foss, and Cindy Griffin, and Jane Donawerth. Specifically, Bridwell-Bowles and Miller perceive that their “contribution to this textual tapestry is to focus on analyzing the roles and representation of woman rhetors across a range of historical moments and across a range of subject positions” (7).

Bridwell-Bowles and Miller note that a one difficulty in their project was the use of the term “woman” or “women.” These terms have been theorized to be racially problematic, as white women and black women experience the world differently; the terms are also sometimes perceived as being gender nonspecific, a concept that Judith Butler discusses, wherein the term “woman” is really one that is on a continuum, with some women identifying closer to a “masculine end” of womanhood and others identifying nearer the “feminine end” of the scale. With these issues in mind, Bridwell-Bowles and Miller feel the terms are still their best option “in order to acknowledge sociopolitical realities of oppression and to further social agendas for change” (8). To help elucidate this choice of terms and their focus on exploring the “roles and representations” of women rhetors, Bridwell-Bowles and Miller use the metaphor of voice, hoping that they give voice to the rhetors represented. Bridwell-Bowles and Miller recognize that the essays in the volume do not cover every corner of their topic, but they hope that “the sampling we have provided here—varied in space, time, ethnicity, spirituality, race, and class—illuminates the pivotal processes of representation, ‘coming to a voice,’ and interpretation for an even broader spectrum of women rhetors and writers” (13-14). The eleven articles in the volume are split into three sections. The first, “Representing Women Rhetors: Complications, Misrepresentations, Occasional Successes,” explores the historical aspects of both individuals and groups in history, such as women in the late middle ages, Mary Whortley Montagu, and Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, the “civilized Indian princess.” The second section, “Representing Women’s Rhetorics: Genres, Strategies, and Techniques,” includes chapter which address women and their rhetorics in specific situations, such as women and the academy and women addressing family

members—specifically, here, a sister. The final section, “Representing Women’s Contemporary Identities: Positions, Locations, Applications,” contains articles focusing on the rhetorics associated with voice, public engagement, and the use of fiction in writing. Considering the trajectory of Bridwell-Bowles’s scholarship, this volume is an exclamation point on her interest in different discourses.

Student Identities

Bridwell-Bowles’s sole textbook, the reader *Identity Matters: Rhetorics of Difference* (1998), written in collaboration Kathleen Sheerin DeVore and Holly Littlefield (both former doctoral advisees), is clearly an extension of her scholarly inquires. In the introduction, which is written for students rather than instructors, the authors discuss how the text can help them better understand themselves, their culture, and their education through exploring their own identities within the often controversial world of the academy. After a brief discussion of writing to learn and writing to communicate, the authors express how they hope the text will allow students to explore the “factors that influence identity” (3) which they will encounter throughout the book. Through the readings presented, the authors propose that students will be both asked and allowed to examine the controversies, “interconnectedness,” and cross-disciplinary issues inherent in identity studies. To guide students through critical reading, included is a set of rhetorical questions they can use to look beyond content and to examine context, authority, stance, audience, purpose, methodology, form, communicative strategy, and style. In keeping with Bridwell-Bowles’s continual interest in transformation, the authors write, “It is our great hope that you be changed in some way by the work that you do with this book” (10). This call for change is similar to Bridwell-Bowles’ suggestion of

transformation—that students will change their thinking about both the ideas they will encounter and their own identities. Following this brief introduction are a range of some canonical and many non-traditional readings clustered under eight headings: “Race and Ethnicity,” “Class,” “Gender and Sexuality,” “Religion and Spirituality,” “Age,” “Ability and Disability,” “Region,” and “Nation.” This textbook is one of the examples of how Bridwell-Bowles is representative in many ways of Bridwell-Bowles overarching research agenda. She has remained dedicated to the exploration of diverse discourses and rhetoric in its many forms; she has also continually worked to find effective methods of instruction, whether through computers or through anthologies, in order to help students learn as much as possible.

Interview: A Conversation with Lillian Bridwell-Bowles

After I finally found a parking spot near the LSU stadium, with the gigantic tiger painted on the side, I smiled at the “*geaux* Tigers!” tribute to the French-Creole background of Baton Rouge. Toward the center of campus, I found Allen Hall, home of the English Department. Once inside, I smelled the slight dustiness of the squeaky old building that seems a common type for studies in the humanities, and I located Lillian’s office. Having arrived early, I went outside to sit on a bench in the quad and watch the students collecting between classes in the humidity-hazed sunshine filtering through the moss on the trees. Even in the summer session, a few hundred students occupied the area, sitting on the benches and the grass, throwing balls or Frisbees, or just lying in the sun; during the year, with LSU’s enrollment of 30,000, I could imagine how busy this spot would be.

When it was time for our interview, I gathered my bags and two baskets of blueberries that Nell Ann Pickett had sent to Lillian and returned to Allen Hall to find Lillian's office. Once again, I certainly knew Lillian's name from my reading, but I wouldn't have been able to identify her in a crowd. Lillian's appearance is not what I think of as the typical academic. She is small, more than a few inches shorter than I, and utterly elegant. She wore flowing silk of blues, purples, and turquoise, which made her blue eyes even more vivid. Combined with her short-cropped silvery hair, she is beautiful, and when she spoke, her soft voice and very slight southern accent somehow added to the overall impression. We met in her office, a small space, lighted by one tall, narrow window and lined floor to ceiling with books. While I set up my equipment on a small, makeshift table, we chatted, as was my habit before actually beginning the interview. I could often find a small hook in those chats, a natural way into the interview, and I discovered it when she mentioned teaching in Florida and that she had grown up in Lakeland, a town in which I had also lived for three years. She went to school at Kathleen High School, which I had often driven by; I knew where she had done her student teaching, and she knew the school where I had taught high school for three semesters. We talked about the college in Lakeland, the public library on the edge of a lake, whose name neither of us could remember (Lake Morton, I've since researched). The initial nervous tension went away. We had common ground.

Childhood and Family

Many of the stories Lillian related also appeared in her article "Film Clips and the Master's Tools," but they took on more vibrancy when related orally. At a young age, Lillian witnessed racism, although she also didn't really know the word "racism" at the

time. In the stories she told me, she explained the way she reacted to issues such as racism as “part of my genetics or something.” She recalled the “white only” water fountains in Lakeland and her puzzled reaction to them, as well as how odd it felt when her family traveled to North Carolina, where her father’s family had owned land since the 17th century. The “plantation mentality” there also confused her. She recalled a very specific incident of racism (which is also in “Film Clips and the Master’s Tools”) that further shaped her sense of racism just not “feeling right”:

I remember once we were in my uncle and grandfather’s store. My father was standing in the front, and a black man from the back of the store walked up. Obviously the two of them were very happy to see each other. I learned later that they were childhood friends. But when the black man reached out to shake my father’s hand, my father’s hand stayed at his side. You know how you have memories that are so powerful it’s like watching a video? That’s how this was. I was behind the counter playing with brass keys on an old cash register and I’m about hand height looking across the counter. I could have been six or seven. But I just thought, “Oh, what’s going on here?” I don’t know what I thought literally at the moment because I was a child, but I played that video over and over in my brain, and I tried to figure out why I would notice that. I think that it has to do with growing up in Florida, which wasn’t like the plantations to me, and going back to North Carolina, which definitely was. Also, I think, in a kind of very simple way that it had to do with Sunday School. [She laughs.] You know, I was being raised in a little Presbyterian church in

Florida and going to Sunday school . . . love one another, you know, all that jazz.

This story is incredibly important to Lillian. As she describes it, “This ‘film clip,’ I think, is one of the defining moments of my life.” This importance would be evident in much of her future scholarship and teaching.

As we had discussed, she grew up in Lakeland, Florida; however, zoning rules required Lillian to go to school in nearby Kathleen, a much smaller town, and she resented it. That may have been the start of some of her rebellion; regardless, she laughed that she challenged everything that she didn’t like. One of her mutinies came in the form of a Home Economics class. The class was required of all the girls, and she thought it was “sexist, and [she] didn’t even know the word.” Her mother agreed with her about the issue, saying, “Anybody who can read can cook,” which Lillian thought was “logical.” With that support, Lillian recalled, “I refused to take home economics and make a little apron and cook brownies. It was just dumb.” Even though it was a state requirement, the school waived it for her. The best part of the story, though, came toward the end of her senior year:

People were getting out of class for home ec to take the Betty Crocker test. And I thought, “That would be good, getting out class.” So, even though I hadn’t had [the class], I went and took the test, and I won the prize. Of course I did, because I could read, just like my mother said. There were decorating things about color, and I had art. So, I had everything that that test asked for. I got the gold spoon and a certificate, which I still have. The home ec teacher gave me that award during senior awards. I don’t know

how she felt about it. I think she understood what I was trying to do, but then I didn't even understand it. I just knew that [the class] was dumb.

Even though she may not have understood it at the time, her stand against sexism would be a thread throughout her life. Her mother had supported her position on the issue, but I asked her what her father thought. "Oh, he was all for it," Lillian said. She has one younger brother, and they were both "really, really smart," so her father was always supportive of them, telling them to "never think small." However, she had always perceived that she and her father had very differing views on politics, that he was "racist and warmongering," until he surprisingly supported her brother on a decision about the Vietnam War. One evening, her brother announced that his name was in the lottery to go to Vietnam; he and Lillian had already discussed it, and if he was called, he planned to go to Canada. He announced this at dinner, and Lillian laughed as she recalled that it was as if "a huge bomb dropped on the kitchen table." Contrary to what she had expected, her father said, "I have raised both of you to have a conscience, and if this is what you believe is right, I'll support you." Lillian described "absolute dead silence in that little kitchen." Her father said, "You know, during WWII, we knew what we were up against. We had Hitler, and it seemed right." She said that he "basically told us that he could see how [Vietnam] didn't seem right." In the end, her brother's number didn't come up and he did not go to Canada, but to law school instead. But Lillian's views on racism, sexism, and politics were not just the product of childhood and teenage rebellion; as her later stories would tell me, she would carry that rebellious spirit into her teaching as well.

Lillian's son, Joel, is from her first marriage, to Jim Bridwell. After Joel was born, Jim came out as gay. (Lillian laughed at this point, saying, "I'm such a tapestry of

the '60s,'70s, and '80s!') She and Jim divorced, but they stayed close friends. As she explained it, "He went to San Francisco to be who he was, and Joel and I survived." Jim died from complications of AIDS, right around the time when Lillian was chairing CCCC. To honor Jim, Lillian placed on the cover of that year's program a picture of the AIDS quilt, and inside the program was pictured a panel representing CCCC to be stitched into the quilt. That time in her life was particularly difficult. Lillian's mother died right before Jim came out, and her father died between the divorce and Jim's death. "That which does not kill us makes us stronger," she quipped. Adding to what she called the "drama queen" mode (in that she had so much drama happening in her life), she also coped with breast cancer in the late 1990s and has remained healthy since. When Lillian was first in remission, she brought Susan Love, a breast cancer researcher and advocate for women's health, to speak at the University of Minnesota. Lillian saw Dr. Love as someone with an important message beyond the breast cancer Lillian had faced: "She's about communication. She's about learning. She's a rhetorician, although she's never thought of herself that way. And she was fantastic." Lillian turned this personal struggle into something else that could intersect with her scholarly work and even enhance it.

A few years after her divorce from Jim, Lillian married Rick Bowles (she explained, "That's how I got all my names"), and considers his son, David, hers as well. Through David, she is also a grandmother of two. As she said of her life, it is "just a great, great story of how after a lot of awful times you can find a partner in your life and construct a family that's what you always dreamed of."

Education, Teaching, and Administration

Lillian started her teaching career as a student teacher at Winter Haven High School, near her hometown of Lakeland. As she describes it, “It was right after they integrated the schools in Winter Haven, and that was a profound experience. I felt like I had found what I needed to do when I started teaching. There was so much happening, so much going on that I wanted to be a part of, and I thought I had an opportunity to change the world.” She laughed, commenting that wanting to change the world “seems to be [her] curse.” And so with teaching as her passion, she taught in integrated schools, but “for a year or two when [she] walked into classrooms either they were all white or all black. De facto segregation. The basic classes were all black and the college prep were all white with maybe one or two black students.” As just a student teacher, and with her stance on racism combined with that environment, she laughed that “it was a wonder [she] got her degree.” The reason she made it through was her supervisor, a “wild woman who was ready for [her]. She was so bored. She had taught Wordsworth’s *Prelude* just one too many times.” Lillian proposed doing some things differently, and, she said, “to make a long story short,” she did. She recalled, “The day I was ready to leave, all of my black students in my basic class just walked out. Just got up and walked out.” But the students came back, and when they did, they were “just loaded down with 33^{1/3} soul music albums, and their comment was, ‘You had absolutely no soul when you came in here and we’re going to make sure you take some with you.’” She laughed again at the memory.

She graduated in 1969 with her B.S. in English Education and in 1970 with her M.S. in English Education from Florida State University. In her first year of teaching, she

“taught every grade from 7 to 12 in a little bitty school in Florida,” in Wakula County, in Florida’s panhandle. There she encountered one student whose story particularly affected her, a young black student with acute sickle cell anemia. When the doctors were able to manage the illness, he would be in school, but then he would get sick again and have to stay home. The guidance counselor asked if Lillian could visit the boy and take some books. So, with directions to the house, she went to the student, for whom she eliminated his surname:

Willie Lee lived in a cabin with a tin roof that was one of three [cabins in that area]. There were three mothers and one father, and it was way back up down on this sandy road. That county is very poor: the mean income when I taught there was \$3,000 per family. Just abject poverty like you’ve probably never seen, that I had never seen up close. So, I took him books, and we got him through the eighth grade and then I left to move to Georgia. He wrote to me; I have those letters. Basically he was kind of my bellwether. If I could do anything to help Willie Lee, then maybe I could be all right as a teacher in a first year.

She recalled one day when Willie Lee was in school, but he had his head down on his desk. Lillian asked what was wrong, and Willie Lee looked up with sad eyes and told her that his dog had died. They both just started crying; she told the class to stay there, and she went to the teacher’s lounge to cry. Her time teaching then was so personal and so important. Lillian recalled, “I can almost name every kid that I had that year and the years that I taught in Georgia.”

Lillian took her passion for teaching and stand against racism with her to teach high school in Georgia as well, where she began her second year of teaching. One of her responsibilities was the drama club, and they came to her with their idea for staging *Cheaper by the Dozen*. She admitted she had hoped for something a little less “pedestrian.” But then the students told her how they wanted to cast it: The African American captain of the basketball team, who “was about 6’8” or something,” would be the father. The white daughter of the local newspaper publisher, from an “old, old family” would be the mother. As for the children: “every other child was black, white, black, white, black, white, and the narrators of the play were to black kids telling the story.” Lillian loved the idea, and so the work began. The newspaper publisher was all for it and printed pictures and advertisements leading up to the event. They decided to do it as dinner theater, for three nights. Lillian exulted:

The best thing about all of it was that the principal, who called me “that female English teacher” and was just on the edge of his seat all the time when I was around, said, “This is the first time that we’ve had any black families.” They came. They came in droves to this thing that we did, and it was one of the best things I ever did.

She clearly loved her work with high school students. During that time, her son was born, and she took a few years off, but went back to teaching. The situation seemed to have changed, though, and she told me about the moment when she knew she would quit high school teaching. She had gone to the office to ask the secretary for a few boxes of paper clips because she was grading a stack of papers. The secretary told her that, no,

she couldn't have a few boxes. But she could give her "10 or 12." Lillian politely thanked her, but:

I knew then—this sounds so dramatic, and maybe I'm a drama queen, I know—but I knew it. It was like a switch that had been flipped in my brain. I had had such a frustrating year. One of my students had committed suicide, the school was oppressive, it was awful, and I said to myself, "Self, you gotta get somewhere where you can change this, and you can't do it as an insider teacher." It was just crystal clear to me, and so I went back to graduate school. It was that simple. It's almost unbelievable. I've never been one to fool around, and I finally knew what I had to do. So, teaching isn't the core of what I do, and I'm always trying to work for some kind of change. It must be my personality to resist and to change, because I keep getting into it.

With this new perspective in place, Lillian returned to graduate school at the University of Georgia, earning an Ed.D. with an emphasis in Composition Research in 1979. Following graduation, Lillian taught for two years at the University of Nebraska. In 1981, she moved to the University of Minnesota, achieving the rank of full professor in 1995, and remained there until 2003, when she moved to LSU.

I was curious about all that had happened to affect Lillian while she was at UMN, and I asked how her personal experiences had shaped her teaching, particularly the impact of Jim's coming out and death. She explained that afterward she felt more aware of these issues and felt that her students needed to be more aware, too. She began to teach about identity and gender issues more specifically, leaning even more heavily into

feminist theory. At times, she said she had “every gay and lesbian on campus” in her courses. “I had some of the wildest classes you could possibly imagine. We explored the ramifications of language and gender in art, whatever,” she recalled. Part of this was about her personal interests: “I guess I was playing out some things in me, too, and discovering things at the same time that the students were discovering—that they could be out in the world and this was a way of thinking about the world that had been kept from them.” In that first group of students, such an atmosphere of acceptance was particularly important to them. Over time, more of her gay students had been out for years and felt comfortable with it, but the earlier students she taught in her gender and identity courses were “precious to her”: “That first wave of students had a different experience of being different in a culture. They had been allowed to be themselves. And *wow*.”

Even with this teaching at her longtime position at Minnesota, Lillian said, “I was happy, but I couldn’t get things done that I wanted to do. It was not a climate that was conducive to things that I wanted to do. Even though I’m very proud of what I did do, very proud of it, there was just more—it was obvious to me—that should be done.” Working with graduate students was part of what made her work fulfilling at UMN and later at LSU. Many of the students became very close to her, both personally and professionally. Lillian has offered support and friendship to students through many academically and personally difficult aspects of their lives and has co-authored several works with former students.

In January of 2004, she accepted an appointment at Louisiana State University to form a Communication across the Curriculum program (CxC), which works with faculty

and students to improve communication, as well as gives students Distinguished Communicator awards. Her work in CxC is 80% administrative, out of the Provost's office, and 20% teaching in the English Department. She had been offered the option of no teaching at all, but she said, "No way. [Because] it's what makes my work worthwhile. It's about as simple as that. I think that for me, intellectual inquiry is part of my identity and personality, and if anything happens or I see anything I don't know about, I'm off to figure it out." She continues her work in the CxC program and has thrived in her new environment, largely because she has felt that both the department and the Provost's office have such faith in what she's doing: "It's just been incredible, the support that I've had here—incredible support to fly this kite, the communication across the curriculum. I think I did a lot in Minnesota, but I think I'm going to be able to influence this place and change it more than I could [there]." That support is toward the 80% directed at administrative work. In the teaching she insisted on retaining, she is able to teach what she wants. That fall, she was planning a graduate seminar in the areas that most interest her, feminist literacy and rhetorical history.

Experience with CCCC

Lillian initially submitted her nomination for the CCCC chair upon Andrea Lundsford's suggestion. Lillian laughed, saying it was typical of Andrea: "You do it." Lillian characterized Andrea's insistence, saying, "She felt very strongly that we needed a feminist, progressive president in the organization, which could get really conservative and stalwart if we didn't do something." Lillian noted that, though, that she took the chair position too early in her career and that the time she devoted to CCCC got her off track

from the publication she wanted to be doing. However, she said she was glad she did the work and felt it was meaningful.

The chair position also provided the opportunity to interact more personally with many people whom she admired. In addition to Lunsford, Lillian mentioned Anne Ruggles Gere; while Lillian said she wouldn't have followed the same career track as had Anne, she admired her scholarship greatly. Lillian also found an unexpected friend in Don McQuade, although at first, she said, "I hated him; he's so pompous and arrogant, and I don't like pompous and arrogant. But then I realized that he wasn't [she laughed], that I had just had a bad first impression, and then I came to love him." Her strongest statements, however, were about Jacqueline Jones Royster, whom she called a huge influence: "She's incredibly productive, she cares about people, she's a good teacher. I admire the way she works in the world. I try to learn and have learned from that a great deal."

Lillian is one of those people whose physical stature is short, but whose sheer audacity makes her the tallest woman in the room. When she and Hildy Miller hosted the second bi-ennial *Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s)* conference in Minneapolis in 1999, the year Lillian was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Lillian stood at the podium and then pulled off her wig in a "Here I am!" gesture, to a great round of applause. Lillian has faced many personal challenges head on, and expects both her colleagues and her profession to do so as well. As she said in her CCCC address, her life has been "directly touched by racism, by war, by AIDS, and by the feminist movement. I have changed and my language and my rhetoric have changed" (55). The challenge we face in the field, Lillian believes, is to translate that diversity to our teaching: "Because we are in the

profession we are in, many of us self-consciously reflect on these changes [to language and rhetoric]. This may be one great contribution we have to make to our students, to model for them our self-reflexive analysis in our own discourse practices” (55). No longer only the “insider teacher,” Lillian continually challenges us to think about ourselves and, more importantly, think about our students.

She reflected on this in the response to her own CCCC address in Duane Roen’s *Views from the Center*, noting how the autobiographical portions of the work showed how she felt so many of her reading and writing opportunities came from outside the classroom. She is worried that the younger generation does not have the same “emphasis on those dreams,” and they lack the kind of role models she felt in her adolescence. Although she notes that this concern may be partly that she is now one of the “people over thirty that we distrusted,” she emphasizes that “we must redouble our efforts as rhetoricians to help students think and act critically in the world my generation is leaving them.” She concludes, “Holding fast to the dream of social transformation is still what gives my work meaning. In my lifetime, I don’t remember a more critical need for ethical, responsible rhetoric” (283). Lillian’s experience with her chair position of CCCC seems to have been less about her own personal development and more about it being a platform to voice what she believes to be important in teaching, in rhetoric, and to the field as a whole.

Leaving Louisiana State University

As a break in the middle of our interview, Lillian treated me to lunch at the University’s elegant faculty club with one of her students, who wanted to talk to someone doing qualitative research. I remembered Lillian’s story of trying to be supportive of her

graduate students, and about Willie Lee—how she helped him and he affected her—and I saw the same sentiment in that lunch, of helping her students in the ways they need it most. When we finished our formal interview, Lillian drove me to her home to show me old scrapbooks and photos, and to introduce me to her husband, Rick. They took me to dinner that evening with another couple from the department, and Lillian offered her guest room instead of my driving home that night. But I needed to log at least another few hundred miles to keep on schedule, and so I turned her down, realizing how remarkable her generosity was towards me. From my perspective of just one day with Lillian, I felt her passion, self-reflection, and steely strength, and with her ability to maintain her humor about it all, she is able to change those she touches, in classrooms and out.

Once again, the hum of the road played a backdrop to my thoughts about all I had learned from Lillian. With some of my participants, I was able to find one clear thread that would pull through both the publications and the narratives. This thread was harder for me to find with Lillian. Upon more reflection, I realized that I was discounting “change” as a possible thread, as it appeared more as a web than a single line. Lillian’s life and her scholarship have gone in many directions, and she has certainly encountered more unexpected turns in her life than the average person. What has interested me most has been starting to understand how Lillian did pull many threads into a stable web. Part of it seemed to be her remarkable ability to find “home” in her new surroundings. Sometimes that home was literal, as in her geographical move or her adaptation to new facts about a husband whom she supported emotionally long after their divorce; sometimes it was adapting to a new scholarly pursuit that she found important.

A clear image in my head from visiting Lillian has become the metaphor to help me really appreciate her ability to adapt. On her dashboard, she had affixed a plastic statue of a gator, about six inches tall. Draped around it were several strands of Mardi Gras beads in purple and gold, LSU's colors. Lillian had mentioned that she wanted to return to the South after she retired, and after her many years in Minnesota, she could easily have followed that map she set out for herself; she could have stayed for five years or so longer in order to officially retire, and then move. Instead, she allowed an unexpected turn lead her—back to the South, yes, but also into a new position and a new set of challenges that she embraced with her usual fearless gusto.

*“Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect of strength—
in search of my mother’s garden, I found my own.”*

Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose*

CHAPTER 5

JACQUELINE JONES ROYSTER

The Ohio State University

Jackie Royster and I met in mid-September, with both our schools about a month into their semesters. The drive was only about 250 miles, an easy stretch on west I-70, and I watched the early fall landscape flatten from the hills of western Pennsylvania to the large, metropolitan college town of Columbus. The Ohio State University, founded in 1870, is one of those sprawling, stately campuses peppered by gray stone buildings and bronze statues. I would meet with Royster in University Hall, where her office was at the time, during a year-long appointment as Interim Dean of the College of the Humanities. The prior version of University Hall was the first building on campus, a typical “old main” building of such universities, with its prominent clock tower; this new structure, erected in the mid 1970s, was built to resemble the first Hall, using the columns, entrance, and tower clock from the original building (“Oval Walking”). University Hall is along “The Oval,” the stretch of open grass often shaped as a “quad” on other campuses. The interior of University Hall has more of the feeling of the 1970s building, especially the main offices, with a front reception desk constructed out of carpeted panels and various offices surrounding it.

I looked forward to meeting with Jackie, as she, along with Anne Ruggles Gere, had been mentioned again and again as being influential to the other participants. At the 2004 CCCC, she was presented with the CCCC Exemplar Award, which is given, through nomination and voting, “to a person whose years of service as an exemplar for [CCCC] represents the highest ideals of scholarship, teaching, and service to the entire profession.” According to the specifics of the honor, “The Exemplar Award seeks to recognize individuals whose record is national and international in scope, and who set the best examples for the CCCC membership” (“CCCC Exemplar”). Royster is known in the field for her extensive work in race and literacy, most specifically in African American women’s rhetoric; indeed, few conversations on this specific area take place without Royster’s input in some form. She has worked extensively as an administrator, including ten years serving on the CCCC Executive Board. Clearly, many people in comp/rhet admire her, and my goal was to discover why.

Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview

Pedagogy, Composition Studies, and Race

Royster graduated with a Doctorate of Arts from The University of Michigan with her dissertation, “Communicating in Writing: A Rhetorical Model for Developing Composition Skills,” and her early publications continue to focus on writing pedagogy. She published “From Practice to Theory: Writing across the Disciplines at Spelman College” in the 1992 collection *Writing, Teaching, and Learning in the Disciplines*. In her preface to the article, she sums up her main research focus, both for this article and through many of her works:

In 1972, I taught my first college-level writing course and discovered the threads of concerns that have held my attention for two decades. We have since named the general arena for these interests “literacy studies.” For me, this arena includes also the interdisciplinary perspectives of women’s studies and African diaspora studies, and I find myself continually crossing disciplinary boundaries and considering dialectical relations.

(119)

Her research agenda of African American women’s rhetoric—a very personal one, as she researches both her own gender and race—has carried her through the two decades she mentions and into her most her current work. Royster worked at Spelman, first teaching and serving at varying levels of administration from 1976 to 1991, including working as Director of the Comprehensive Writing Program. In “From Practice to Theory,” Royster discusses Spelman’s “writing-across-the-disciplines” program, which began in 1978. As had most programs such as Spelman’s comprehensive program, the initial intent was to move writing away from solely an English department initiative to one addressed across the campus. Beginning with faculty development workshops, Royster and her team found that although these workshops changed faculty attitudes toward writing, they still were not confident in students’ writing abilities, an issue of deep importance to a program devoted to furthering writing education on campus through an interdisciplinary approach. Royster then explains the methods she uses in her faculty workshops, both on and off campus. She first asks faculty to picture what they felt they were trying to accomplish in the classroom and who they would need to be for that to happen, whether that be a painter, a bus driver, or a bridge (three examples she lists in the

text) (123). By helping faculty understand that they bring more than just their teacher *personae* but also other parts of their personal life into the classroom, Royster was able to lead faculty into the current research on good practices for undergraduate education, emphasizing that as faculty members, we have to actually create a space of potential learning rather than assume it will just happen naturally. Royster sees the teacher and student being connected through concerns of context, content, process, and product. In this model, “each factor represents a point of focus, a lens through which to view the classroom” (125). She further explains that helping “students negotiate the space between starting an activity and finishing it” is important, and suggests a discussion of concept just as “Idea,” “Public Performance,” and “Mystical Process,” which refers to the often slippery task of actually teaching students to write and which includes such tasks as inquiry, problem solving, thinking, writing, and talking (127). With these models in mind, faculty members need to redefine literacy, becoming “more reflective about the ways of their disciplines . . . how their disciplines work, what they value, what students who are seeking to do well in these areas need to know how to do in order to be anointed ‘literate’ and productive” (128). Overall, Royster discusses the success and continued growth of the writing across the disciplines program at Spelman College, adding it to the many individual stories that can help others “in the creating of different, more hopeful stories for greater numbers of students whose potential remains significantly untapped” (131). By helping faculty to understand that if many students, including African American students, have more potential than is sometimes recognized and indeed, if they often have more success than they are given credit for, then we may tailor our pedagogy to better help students reach their goals.

Royster believes it important to fight for an understanding of student potential as well as to push for more equity in our understanding of composition in order to make it more responsive and responsible. She edited *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender, and Culture* with Ann Marie Mann Simpkins. This collection of essays reflect on the ways in which different academic identities are represented (whether correctly or not) in the academic world, much in the way members of high society in the 19th century presented “calling cards.” Royster also addresses the issues of representation and misrepresentation of student and scholar discourse in other publications, including “A New Lease on Writing” in *Tapping the Potential of Black Students*, edited by Charlotte Brooks (1985); “Literature, Literacy, and Language: Old Challenges, New Opportunities” in *Critical Theory: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Politics*, edited by James Slevin and Art Young (2002); “Academic Discourses, or Small Boats on a Big Sea” in *Alt Dis: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*, edited by Christopher L. Schroeder, Helen Fox, and Patricia Bizzell (2002); and several other articles and monographs.

The editors of *College Composition and Communication* called on her understanding of how African American scholars are represented in the special edition “A Usable Past: CCC at 50: Part 2” (1999). This article in the CCC edition, “History in the Spaces Left: African American Presence and Narratives of Composition Studies,” by Royster and Jean C. Williams, was also republished (and cited here) in *Trends and Issues in PostSecondary English Studies: 2000*, produced by NCTE. In this article, Royster and Williams suggest that composition studies needs to look beyond the usual narratives of the field so that we have a more complex understanding of our work and might better prepare a broader range of students, particularly minority students who are performing

well. Following a brief recap of several histories of composition, including works by Kitzhaber, Berlin, North, Miller, Brereton, and Fontaine and Hunter, the authors suggest that each of these studies is problematic in the ways in which they present the field. Part of the problem is encapsulated in a quote the authors cite from Berlin, in which he “warns us that ‘there are no definitive histories’ and that ‘each history endorses an ideology, a conception of economic, social, political, and cultural arrangements that is privileged in its interpretation’” (564). Royster and Williams agree with this potentially reductionist approach to the history of the field, noting that instead of “filling in the gaps” of these traditional histories, we often tend to *praise* them, assuming they represent the entirety of the field. Within each of the mentioned histories, the authors point out specific concerns: unexplored limitations of the studies: focusing on the dominant perspective; being only partially inclusive, such as focusing on women but no minorities; creating a potential space for minority students, but without allowing for minority viewpoints of that space; and continually conflating minority students with basic writers. In fact, Royster and Williams argue, issues of basic writing were being addressed before issues of minority writers, and so this conflation is actually a “back” definition. Overall, Royster and Williams argue that these histories do not sufficiently include the range of viewpoints which actually exist in the field.

With the contradictions of these other histories in mind, Royster and Williams provide a “historical view of African Americans in higher education,” but note that while institutional histories are clear, the contribution of African American scholars is difficult to trace because it has not been “historically celebrated” (575). However, Royster and Williams “recover” the work of three “exemplars”: Alain Locke, “for his work as a

cultural theorist, literary and arts critic, and educational philosopher,” whose work is from the early part of the 20th century; Hallie Quinn Brown, “for her expertise in developing literate abilities through her pedagogy and textbook production, and also for her own expertise as an orator,” with work spanning from the late 19th and early 20th centuries; and Hugh M. Gloster, “for his role as a literary critic, as the editor on an anthology of African American writers, and also for his pioneering leadership in the development of English professional organizations,” active in the middle 20th century (575). Royster and Williams provide an overview of each scholar’s educational history, their activity within professional organization, and the ways in which each pioneered scholarship in their areas of expertise and contributed significantly to the field of composition.

By recovering the work of such African American scholars, Royster and Williams aim to “adjust the historical lens by shifting the gaze to the experiences of African Americans” (579). This includes expanding the discussion of the history of higher education to reach to the 19th century instead of staying firmly in the 20th; providing student examples that cannot be labeled as “basic writers”; and recovering the type of singular achievements that they have provided in the article (579). Royster and Williams’ concept of “history in the places left” comes from an image that William Cook used in his 1992 chair’s address, “Writing in the Spaces Left.” Cook also discussed the narratives which have not been explored as they are out of the hegemonic storyline of composition (580). In light of Cook’s discussion and Royster and Williams’ own findings, they suggest that we must move beyond the standard versions of the history of our field and to understand the “negative effects of primacy.” Our previous narratives “have

simultaneously directed our analytical gaze selectively, casting, therefore, both light and shadow across the historical terrain.” We need to acknowledge both that light and dark, to look into the previously ignored shadows of composition. In considering new perspectives, we can begin to ask new questions, which will help us to find new ways to operate with more inclusiveness, “in a more generative and less offensive manner” (581).

In their attempt to show the examples of African American scholars and students who have gone unnoticed previously, Royster and Williams present a call for looking back more accurately and for moving forward with better practices. They then suggest that composition studies can meet this call by working to “resist the primacy of ‘officialized’ narratives”; by using “better interpretive frames” that will allow for a more inclusive understanding of scholarly achievements; by combining these two ideas “to help a broader range of students to perform at higher levels of achievement” (582-83). As Royster and Williams are writing for the 50th anniversary of CCC, they suggest that it is time that we understand: “History is important, not just in terms of who writes it and what gets included or excluded, but also because history, by the very nature of its inscription as history, has consequence—social, political, cultural” (583). This article, published in a volume that seeks to represent the journal of CCCs at its 50-year mark, shows an historical lens through which Royster (and Williams) view the needs of composition studies.

African American Women’s Rhetoric and Historical Ethnography

These “recovered stories” are the common focus of Royster’s considerable body of work. With careful research, she presents the stories of previously little studied women, particularly African American women rhetors, and uses her personal experience

as a lens with which to analyze this work. She also offers suggestions for how we might consider different ways of viewing these women's rhetoric, thereby expanding rhetorical studies in general. One of her notable works of history, *Profiles of Ohio Women: 1803-2003* (2003), won the First Place Award from the National Federation of Press Women and the First Place Award from Ohio Professional Writers. As the title suggests, Royster profiles 200 notable women in Ohio's history, grouping them into seventeen categories, including business and finance, education, law and politics, literature, and religion. Each one-page profile consists of a short biography, a summary of the woman's achievements, and a black-and-white photo. Similarly, in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (1997), Royster publishes three pamphlets by Wells, who was an African American "journalist, public speaker, and community activist" (vi). Through the three works on the anti-lynching movements, Royster discusses lynching and other acts of "mob violence" as "a multilayered aspect of American history, with dimensions related to political and economic power as well as to race and gender control" (vii).

Royster has studied numerous other African American scholars. She often weaves these "recovered" works with her own personal experiences as a means of analysis. One example is "Time Alone, Place Apart: The Role of Spiracy in Using the Power of Solitude." It was first published in *The Center of the Web* (1994), which was reprinted in *Women/Writing/Teaching* (1998, cited here), edited by Jan Zlotnik Schmidt, the version of which I will provide citations for here.. Here, Royster explains her concept of "spiracy," which she defines later in the article more fully as her perception of how she is able to find time for solitude within a very busy schedule. Royster reflects on growing up

as an only child and “struggl[ing] mightily to distinguish between being alone and being lonely, being apart and being isolated, living differently and being different” (267). With the help of her parents, she eventually became both accustomed to and comfortable with a sense of solitude, and often turned toward creativity and the books and writing her parents made possible. Early on, then, she “learned . . . to rejoice in the potential of being alone” (268). As an adult, however, with the responsibilities of work, family, and other important commitments, she has found it less possible to find that creative solitude. Instead of letting herself “drown in a sea of obligations that are at the same time also [her] pleasures and [her] passions” (269), she looked instead for inspiration from and a type of companionship with African American women writers. In these women’s words, Royster recognizes herself, and understanding their lives helps her to be more productive. She focuses on three women in particular: Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell, Anna Julia Cooper, and Maria W. Stewart.

Mossell, a journalist for both white and African American periodicals, wrote *The Work of the Afro-American Woman* in 1908. In one of her essays, “A Lofty Study,” Mossell describes how one woman had converted her attic into a small study, a place of solitude for her own writing, the sort of place Mossell realized she did not have—the “room of one’s own” that Virginia Woolf would describe 21 years later. Royster recognized through this essay, “We must also awaken to the necessity of feeling entitled to a place apart” (270).

Royster also finds this need for time alone to find inspiration through the writing of Cooper, “a former slave who went on to become a teacher, a writer, a scholar, a social activist, a woman who was among the first African American women to earn a Ph.D., and

the first from this group to be named president of a college” (270). In her 1892 *A Voice from the South*, Cooper encourages “the true brain worker” to find the basic sustenance she needs to do her work. In Cooper’s words, Royster hears “an undernourished spirit . . . pain and . . . frustration,” but she also is inspired by “her resiliency and her determination to be productive and to make a difference.” Royster, too, has felt such frustration in finding space for her work, but she also considers what Cooper “was able to do with less than [she had],” and through this connection, Royster finds that she “[is] renewed” (271).

Royster also recounts the life of Maria W. Stewart, “a free-born woman who wrote in the 1930s and who is generally acknowledged by scholars as the first African American woman political writer,” a “pioneer” of her time who both wrote and spoke publically (271-72). Stewart also reflects on solitude, but specifically on the “need to make use of the power of solitude within a more meaningful framework”; Royster is particularly struck by Stewart’s proclamation, “I stand alone in your midst” (272). This need for solitude, even in the midst of other people, in order to be creative is what Royster labels “spiracy,” roughly a combination of spiritually situating herself in her own world and finding space within it: “the capacity to be propelled toward solitude as a state of consciousness” (272). In her academic world, this understanding comes to Royster through the overlap of her research in “literacy studies, Women’s Studies, and African diaspora studies.” She finds satisfaction in each field separately, but when the three come together in a “multidimensionality of connection and vision,” she explains, “I live and breathe, sense my own potential, and feel capable of productivity. I feel in focus, attuned to my thoughts” (273). The three disciplines she embraces become for her “lenses through which [she] can make sense of this spectrum, see the world, think, write, and

search for truths,” which give her a strong sense of spiritual grounding. She has also felt kinship with Stewart in a “sense of mission,” particularly in terms of Black feminist thought. Royster also sees herself as an “academic activist, a person who has chosen (even if I have not been chosen) to be a politically conscious watchdog, a sentry for the need for positive change in the world of education” (273). Here again, she brings together her three main areas of interest and finds herself not always able to find solitude as a physical reality but as a “state of consciousness” (274) to which she can return, even in the midst of being busy with outside tasks and circumstances. This finding of solitude through a state of consciousness for her is “spiracy.”

Royster concludes by giving advice to other women seeking this sense of spiracy, using her own efforts as an example. In order to find the solitude she needs to continue doing good work, Royster draws inspiration from the African American writers she has mentioned, first by creating her own space, even if only as an illusion, through “order and organization.” She “find[s] [her] own place within the covers of multi-colored folders and within the tiny spaces of little boxes.” She also uses whatever small spaces of time she may find, whether that is on an airplane or in the shower, and works to listen to herself, rather than to the “chaos around [her].” At other times, she finds she must “stop pretending and also make time for [her]self in more traditional ways” (274), through literally taking a break from the pressures of her obligations. Overall, Royster has found inspiration from black women writers, not only in what they have written and the ideas they have given her, but also in the sense of a legacy she has received, the “twofold heritage as [her] intellectual ancestry . . . and from this place, [she] finds solace and solitude,” and empowerment (275). Through viewing her own story through the lens of

other African American women, Royster shows how she been empowered and educated, partly through the role models of strong women in her life, who both allowed and pushed her toward being so well educated; in turn, she tries to lends that power and education to other women scholars.

Rhetor and Orator

As with all of the CCCC chair addresses, the first version is the oral one delivered at the conference and is also printed in a follow-up in *College Composition and Communication*. Royster's address, "When the First Voice You Hear is not Your Own," was also reprinted in the second edition of *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, edited by Victor Villanueva, which I cite here. In the address, Royster explores three scenes of "personal challenge" to her when confronting cross-disciplinary discourse, noting that overall, the "'subject' position really is everything" (29). In her "Scene One," Royster describes how she has sat through many discussions: "[as] a well-mannered Other, silently, in a state of tolerance that requires me to be as expressionless as I can manage, while colleagues who occupy a place of entitlement different from my own talk about history and achievements of people from my ethnic group, or even about their perceptions of our struggles" (30). She is careful to note that such scenes do not represent "acts of random unkindness"; however, the overall effect is her realization that "in metaphoric fashion, these 'authorities' let [her] know, once again, that Columbus has discovered America and claims it now, claims it still for a European crown" (31). By explaining her own viewpoint for seeing such awkward situations, in which people seem to forget in making comments about minorities that Royster is one herself, Royster emphasizes that the lens of the subjective will allow scholars both to understand the

importance of contextualization, but also to understand that “an interpretive view is just that—interpretive” (31); that is to say, the views are not just open for interpretation by others, but have been interpreted to have specific meanings. To explain her view of what it means for a more dominant culture to enter the purview of an Other culture and make claims or assumptions, Royster uses the analogy of it being akin to walking into someone else’s home, “tramping around the house like you own the place.” This violation of a house idea, akin to “coming to judgment too quickly, drawing on information too narrowly, and saying hurtful, discrediting, dehumanizing things without undisputed proof” is not just inappropriate, but “is not good manners” (32). Royster argues that we need to look beyond our assumptions and think more broadly. After all, she questions, “What might happen if we treated differences in subject position as critical pieces of the whole, vital to thorough understanding, and central to both problem-finding and problem-solving?” (34). At that point in time (1995), Royster declared that none of this has yet been allowed to happen within composition/rhetoric.

In “Scene Two” of her personal scenarios, Royster explains that she has “felt enraged” by the situations in “Scene One.” However, she has “chosen not to be distracted or consumed by [her] rage at voyeurs, tourists, and trespassers, but to look at what [she] can do,” including “serv[ing] as a guide and translator for Others” (34). Through this section, she uses a metaphor posed by W.E.B. DuBois, that of “the Veil,” a way of seeing light through both sides, thus being helpful to each perspective. This concept is important to Royster because:

I have accepted the idea that what I call my “home place” is a cultural community that still exists quite significantly beyond the confines of a

well-insulated community that we call the “mainstream,” and that between this world and the one that I call home, systems of insulation impede the vision and narrow the ability to recognize human potential and to understand human history both microscopically and telescopically. (34)

With this narrowing of vision impeding true cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural understandings, Royster has decided that, instead of sitting quietly, she will speak up, “raising another voice, [her] voice in the interest of clarity and accuracy” (34). She has found, however, that when she talks about her own community, that of African American women, she encounters “deep disbelief” (34):

[People seem] flabbergasted . . . [showing a] type of surprise rather “naturally” emerg[ing] in a society that so obviously has the habit of expecting nothing of value, nothing of consequence, nothing of importance, nothing at all positive from its Others, so that anything is a surprise; everything is an exception; and nothing of substance can really be claimed as a result. (34-35)

Royster believes that through her work discussing African American women essayists, she provides “cultural proofs” and examples of ideas many mainstream thinkers have not encountered, and she also brings the power of storytelling, noting that such narrative theory “respects long-standing practices in African-based culture.” The difficulty of this narrative work is that it is often dismissed as “simple stories” rather than as “vital layers of a transformative process” (35). This dismissal is a clear example of the bias Jeffrey Di Leo suggested toward autobiographical or narrative methodologies within literature studies, and as others supported, in the academy in general. However, the

“stories” such as the one Royster tells are crucial to an understanding of her culture. She proclaims, “In spite of my fear that no one is listening to me or is curious enough to try to understand my voice, it is still better to speak out”; to do this, she draws strength from the words of many African American writers, including, here, Langston Hughes, Ida Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Audre Lorde (35-36).

Royster depicts in “Scene Three” the ways in which she has chosen to speak out, but has often met with reactions that have made her “weary” (36). She describes one instance in which she read from part of a novel, giving voice to the characters in the vernacular that would suit them. A well-intentioned audience member marveled at her ability to use her “‘authentic’ voice” (36). Although Royster tried “gently” to explain that she has many voices, including her academic voice, the remark was lost on the listener. In explaining this incident, she refers to the work of bell hooks, agreeing, “I claim all my voices as my own very much authentic voices, even when it’s difficult for others to imagine a person like me having the capacity to do that” (37). The problem Royster recognizes from this exchange is that our field doesn’t have the understanding of “hybrid people” who have the ability “to move with dexterity across cultural boundaries.” She uses the example given by Cornel West that “most African Americans . . . dream in English,” and that just as jazz and blues musicians have been given instruments, the African American women essayists she studies have at some point been given “a pencil, a pen, a computer keyboard” (37). With both the musicians and writers, Royster proclaims, “Genius emerges from hybridity, from Africans who, over the course of time and circumstance, have come to dream in English, and I venture to say that all of their voices

are authentic” (37). In order to understand that genius, however, we must allow ourselves to truly see from a subject point of view, especially when the subject is Other.

Royster’s goal in presenting these three scenes is to support her belief that “there is a pressing need to construct paradigms that permit us to engage in better practices in cross-boundary discourse, whether we are teaching, researching, writing, or talking with Others, whoever those Others happen to be” (37-38). As she continues, Royster emphasizes that in our teaching, we need to not only talk, but listen, as this is a site where we are asking for a great deal of trust from our students and we must understand how to work *with* them, rather than “for, about, and around them” (38). She also emphasizes that we must use these better practices in communicating the needs of our field to our own administrators and other officials outside our departments. Because we have instead “talk[ed] primarily to ourselves,” Royster points out that we are experiencing the “consequences” of “funds being cut, programs being eliminated, and national agencies that are vital to our interests being bandied about as if they are post-it notes, randomly stuck on some ill-informed spendthrift.” Politically, too, she proclaims, “It is time to speak for ourselves, in our own interests, in the interest of our work and in the interest of our students” (39). Part of this transformation can come through the organizations of NCTE and CCCC working more closely together. [The two organizations were in the middle of a conflict at that time.] Finally, Royster quotes Thoreau in saying, “Only that day dawns to which we are awake” to preface her last, carefully cadenced paragraph:

So my appeal is to urge us all to be awake, awake and listening, awake and operating deliberately on codes of better conduct in the interest of keeping our boundaries fluid, our discourse invigorated with multiple

perspectives, and our policies and practices well-tuned toward a clearer respect for human potential and achievements from whatever their source and a clearer understanding that voicing at its best is not just well-spoken but also well-heard. (40)

The rhythm of the spoken rhetoric lurks still in the written version. Royster is well known for her engaging speaking, and has been asked to present at more than 50 events. One such address was a keynote address at the Thirtieth Anniversary Rhetoric Society of America Conference in 1998, the theme for which was *Rhetoric, the Polis, and the Global Village*. Andrea Lundsford recalls this address on the occasion of Royster being presented with Ohio State's University's Distinguished Lecturer Award in 2003.

Lundsford, herself a former Ohio State professor, supported Royster being so honored:

It is no exaggeration to say that Jacqueline Jones Royster is one of the most deeply respected scholars in rhetoric and writing studies today One of Royster's greatest strengths is her ability to engage others. Let me offer one concrete example: a few years ago, Royster was invited to give one of two keynote addresses at the Rhetoric Society of America conference, which draws a large and diverse group of scholars from English, classics, communications and philosophy. The first keynote speaker, arguably the most distinguished scholar of classical rhetoric in the country, delivered a fine talk, met with appreciation, loud applause and a lively question and answer session. "Hard act to follow," I thought to myself, glad that I was not the second speaker. Royster took the microphone late in the second day of the conference; participants were

noticeably tired. Then she started speaking slowly and artfully about “Sarah,” the young African woman aboard the *Amistad*, and she went on to carry out the stunning rhetorical analysis of the role literacy played in this woman’s life. I was sitting near the back of the large room, and I could feel the energy rise; it felt at times as if an electric current were running from row to row. At the conclusion of this speech, Royster received the only standing ovation I have ever witnessed in 25 years of attending these meetings, and I dare say every person in the audience remembers this talk as vividly as I do today. (“2003 University”)

In the talk to which Lundsford refers, “Sarah’s Story: Making a Place for Historical Ethnography in Rhetorical Studies,” Royster speaks in familiar territory of uncovering the story of a seven-year-old girl, Mar-gru, or Sarah, who was a captive on *La Amistad*. Royster carefully crafts her speech, and the cadence of the spoken word is apparent. Royster is not only a rhetorician in her methodological approaches, but also in the original sense, an orator who can speak with great power.

Traces of a Stream

Royster’s *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* (2000) is one of her most cited and most celebrated works; it was awarded MLA’s annual Mina P. Shaughnessy award in 2000, which is “presented for an outstanding scholarly book in the fields of language, culture, literacy, or literature with strong application to the teaching of English” (“Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize”). In *Traces of a Stream*, Royster continues the approach of historical ethnography, combining the works of African American writers with her own experience to arrive at an overarching

rhetorical approach. The “traces of a stream” is a reference to a metaphor Royster uses throughout the text, that of a growing river. This comes partly from Langston Hughes’ line, “My soul has grown deep like the rivers.” Royster carefully writes toward what she calls a “kaleidoscopic view” of “afrafeminist” rhetoric, terms she will define thoroughly in the course of her argument. She begins by explaining the origins of this viewpoint in her first section, “A Rhetorical View,” which begins with “In Search of Rivers”; here, Royster addresses Alice Walker’s 1983 essay collections: *Meridian*, *Living by the Word*, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved*, and *In Search of our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose*.” Royster cites these as prominent examples of how many African American women using have used the genre of the essay to “connect literacy and social action” (41). Partly because the form of the essay has “tremendous flexibility across a range of rhetorical, ideological, experiential, and aesthetic choices” (23), Royster demonstrates how several prominent African American women, including Walker, have been able to find both a personal and intellectual voice within the genre. Using a close reading of several of Walker’s essays, Royster demonstrates ways in which Walker merges the oral and literate, which Royster believes expands the standard rhetorical triad to add a new category, “rhetorical action,” shifting the focus on these writings toward “concerns about context, ethos, and rhetorical action” (32). Royster clarifies that she does not intend to be essentialist about African American women’s essays, but points out that the features of Walker’s essays, particularly the issue of social action, can be traced through most of the works of African American women.

In “Toward an Analytical Model for Literacy and Sociopolitical Action,” the second chapter of the rhetorical section, Royster presents her model of a “kaleidoscopic

view” as a theoretical framework for the analysis of African American women’s literature, which allows her to analyze these essays through several lenses. She first discusses other frameworks for literacy, including both oral and written (Ong; Scollon and Scollon; Scribner and Cole; Heath; Tannen, et al.); she also discusses how literacy has been viewed as sociopolitical action, noting especially the work of Freire and Macedo. Using the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, she discusses how “we make meaning through conventionalized, socially and culturally determined uses of language” (51). Royster argues that this broad theoretical framework helps her show that the literacy of African American women “connects profoundly, variously, and inextricably with their lives in specific contexts as they have acquired literacy” (45). She defines literacy as a “sociocognitive ability,” one that extends as well to such oral literacy as that of Sojourner Truth. Royster’s view of literacy as a sociopolitical action “takes into account three basic features of literate acts: *the context for literacy production; the formation of ethos; and rhetorical action*—that is, the meaning-making strategies actually deployed by the writer” (61). Each of these “lenses,” she argues, does not work alone to examine her chosen subject, but rather “the interpretive power comes from the kaleidoscopic view, that is, from the merging of all three” (63), which will then “complicate our thinking, rather than simplify it, in search of greater clarity and also greater interpretive power” (73). This more complex framework is essential for understanding the complexities of African American women’s essays.

In the second section of the text, Royster addresses “A Historical View,” starting with the “The Genesis of Authority,” in which she discusses how African American women “have chosen literacy as a mechanism for operating effectively within their own

communities” (106). To support this idea, she starts with the concept of two Swahili words (used by John S. Mbiti): *sasa* and *zamani*, which refer to two concepts of time. Royster explains *sasa* as “personal time,” the time when an “individual exists physically in the world” (79), including the immediate past, present, and immediate future. After that individual no longer exists, she becomes a part of *zamani*, where “a person joins the collective or the community of spirits and achieves collective immortality” (79). For Royster, this concept is crucial to viewing the writing of African American women, as these authors write not just from their own experience, but also from the collective experience of their ancestors. Royster further supports this view with the work of Benjamin Quarles, who explains that African culture now exists in many African American communities, and, further, that African culture has mixed with other cultures to become a part of what it means to be “American,” such as with some forms of jazz and rock music (85). To follow this idea of writing from one’s ancestry, Royster discusses the difficulties of tracing African women’s lives in pre-colonial times as well as how enslaved African women suddenly became African American; she is careful to point out the cultural variances among these women, observing that no single history can stand for all. However, regardless of the region in which they lived in Africa, African American women all had in common that “women in all sorts of categories fell victim to the slave trade” (98). Most of the women who came to America through the slave trade were old enough to have memory of their African cultures; based in part on these cultures and their experiences in America as slaves, these ancestors of modern day African American women, Royster posits, shared certain attitudes: “a sense of autonomy,” based partly on their own “personal value” as part of their family and community systems; a positive

sense of ethos and “female power,” including a sense of women’s ‘rights;’ and an understanding of the ways in which women should work to “assur[e] the survival rate of the tribe” as well as the value of cooperative work (103). This understanding of her “place in the world” ultimately contributed to the modern African American woman writer’s sense of authority to write, particularly to use literacy as a route to sociopolitical activism.

In “Going Against the Grain: The Acquisition and Use of Literacy,” the historical section’s second chapter, Royster explains, “The basic assertion of this chapter is that the history of African American women’s literacy is a story of visionaries, of women using sociocognitive ability to re-create themselves and to reimagine their worlds” (110). With dual constraints against acquiring literacy, of being both women and African American, the women of Royster’s study called on the cultural memory addressed in the previous chapter to resist the potential “break[ing] of their will and their spirit”; they emerged with a “readiness from within” and “this legacy of resiliency, of psychic and spiritual strength, served as a foundational element in individual and organization action” (113). Royster then discusses early activists, beyond the usual invocation of Harriet Tubman, and the work of several historians who “chronicle incidents large and small that have formed the fabric of resistance” (116). Overall in this chapter, Royster shows how African American women of the 18th and 19th centuries began to use literacy, and in particular, the genre of the essay to “raise their voices” and “establish a place for themselves as users of the word” (175).

The final chapter in the historical section, “From This Fertile Ground: Formal Training in the Development of Rhetorical Prowess,” addresses how African American

women gained “rhetorical expertise” through higher education (177), in spite of multiple barriers for such success. Royster follows the efforts for establishing higher education for African Americans from 1817, during the time of the colonization movement, and into the 20th century, including through institutions such as Oberlin, Wilberforce University, Lincoln University, and Atlanta University. She also discusses the impact of women’s organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women, church auxiliary organizations, the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society, and the Black Clubwomen’s Movement. Of the club movement, Royster argues that it “actually permitted women with different matrices of identity, different perceptions of needs, and different priorities for sociopolitical mandates (cultural, social, political, economic, religious) to form a shared space—a community.” Royster discusses several writings, noting that even the political writings of current essays include a grounding in personal experience, what Royster calls “a sense of ‘I-ness’—that is, autobiography and autoethnography” (237). These and other features are clear in contemporary essays, and from the tradition she has detailed in this section, Royster claims that “two centuries signal that these woman have only just begun” (238).

“An Ideological View,” with the chapter title “A View from a Bridge: Afrafeminist Ideologies and Rhetorical Studies” closes the book. In this section, Royster makes an interesting move: she shifts her point of view from “they” to “we,” and includes her own experience, a turn that she explains in the introduction she does quite purposefully. Having established a theoretical framework for her work, Royster tells her own story in coming to this research. Through her scholarly work, she explains, she realizes that she “had set [her]self on a pathway that was more transdisciplinary than

interdisciplinary and more afrofeminist than feminist” (257). She uses the more specific term “afrofeminist” to show how her research of African American women includes many of the same ideas as feminism, but is also differently focused because of the particular history of women of African descent. Royster explains that she has learned that “people who do intellectual work need to understand their intellectual ancestry” (265) . . . and “to understand power and how they are affected by it” (268). As a researcher, Royster considers herself a participant/observer, and as so, sees herself and others as “accountable to those with whom or about whom we speak” (275). Further, she claims, “African American intellectuals are challenged to build bridges between afrofeminist insights within the group and the visions and experiences of others” (277), and that this work is “multidirectional,” asking the scholar to look both internally and externally, always using the kaleidoscopic approach she describes earlier. Finally, Royster explains that approaching this intellectual work requires “four sites of critical regard: *careful analysis, acknowledgment of passionate attachments, attention to ethical action, and commitment to social responsibility*” (279). When thoughtfully practiced, such an approach to literacy practices will allow researchers to look beyond their own work and to understand other scholarship, too, including the intersections of “private, social, and public space” (285). Royster closes the text with two appendices: first, a listing of “some early African American women contributors, editors, publishers, and owners of periodical publications,” and second, a list of “some early periodical publications with which African American women writers were associated” (289-295).

Traces of a Stream is an awarded, representative example of Royster’s scholarly work, thus not just worthy of this lengthy coverage but also essential, as it is a powerful

representation of her consistent research agenda. The text is meticulously planned, with each chapter—each paragraph—leading slowly and carefully to her final arguments. From her careful explication of essays to her intentional turn in point of view, Royster shows her tremendous power as a rhetorician. “Traces” of this text can be found in her prior works as she began formulating these ideas, and later works show how her thinking in this book has given her a springboard as a scholar.

Interview: A Conversation with Jacqueline Jones Royster

Jackie had several other meetings that day and evening, so our few hours of time were precious. Her office was filled with books, with full, color-coded folders stacked on her desk and oval conference table; a large framed poster of dozens of beaded shoes hung on one wall, and displayed on the shelves in front of the books were several small boxes—some of the “tiny boxes of spiracy” she had mentioned in her writing. Jackie greeted me warmly, dressed stylishly in shades of gray, accented by large, silver disc earrings. A few inches shorter than I, she was another woman who projected a physical height beyond the actual, and when we sat, I commented on her perfume, a spicy/wooded floral that just seemed to suit her. She laughed and told me it was “Paloma Picasso,” a longtime favorite; it seems a small detail, but my experience is that women who wear a signature scent that is subtle and flattering usually know themselves quite well. As we continued our “small talk,” I quickly organized my equipment at one end of the oval table, and we moved into our conversation.

Childhood and Family

Jackie was born in the small town of Greensboro, Georgia, about 30 miles from the University of Georgia. She was an only child to her “very practical parents,” but she grew up with a lot of cousins:

My mother was the oldest of seven. She’s kind of the matriarch of her family, and her younger sister is about like my sister to me. Their mother died when they were 12 and 13 and they grew up very much with my mother’s attention. So, I grew up thinking they were my sisters until I got old enough to know that there are these family distinctions.

Her father was the third child of five, and although that family didn’t have as many children, she said, “I grew up with a very strong sense of family on both sides.” Her father drove a logging truck for most of his life, but not as a long-distance trucker; he was home every night. Her father’s brother also drove a logging truck, and her cousins now are long-distance truckers. She explained that they “didn’t grow up thinking about it as a family tradition or a family business, but that’s exactly what was.”

Jackie’s mother was a public school teacher:

For many years, she taught math at different levels, but she ended her career with a specific dedication to teaching what was then labeled as EMR, “educable mentally retarded” kids. The last 15 years of her career were with EMR students, elementary school students. She loved it because she believed in the children. She saw some of the things that we see in our classrooms but in a different way than others. She built a pretty good record up in her community with being able to mainstream kids.

I learned even more about Jackie through an interesting and informative text that came out after my interviews, *Women's Ways of Making it in Rhetoric and Composition* (2008, edited by Michelle Ballif, Diane Davis, and Roxanne Mountford), which also profiles Jackie, along with two of my other participants, Cynthia Selfe and Shirley Wilson Logan. Ballif, Davis, and Mountford focus on the strategies of success these women have employed, and the authors were able to provide details beyond the time constraints of my interviews. For example, they flesh out the story of Jackie's mother. In their text, Jackie calls her mother "'something of a revolutionary' . . . and an outcast in her own hometown [because] she was very outspoken'" (281-282). This reputation came about because when Jackie's mother and several other teachers were fired—and banned from teaching in the county—for speaking against the unequal funding provided to the new black school in town, Jackie's mother was the only one who chose to continue living in the town, although she drove to teach at outside counties. Following Jackie's grandmother's death, her mother took three-year-old Jackie to school with her, and so Jackie began learning at grade levels much higher than her age. She was able to graduate from high school at 15 (Ballif, Davis, and Mountford 282).

Jackie grew up in Georgia, taught there for over sixteen years, and seemed quite rooted there, so I asked her why she had left Georgia to come to Ohio State from Spelman. She explained that it actually wasn't her move, but her husband's. She met her husband, Patrick, when she was at Spelman, who was in public administration at Morehouse at the time. Although he was born in Pennsylvania, he grew up in Akron, Ohio, attended The College of Wooster, then Ohio State, and worked for the state of Ohio; he was in public administration and took a job at Morehouse. After finishing his

Ph.D. in political science at Emory, he wanted to move, but they didn't want to do the long distance approach, so they both went onto the job market. It was difficult finding a spot, but since Patrick is not on the professor track, they were able to find what works for them. "People assume it was my move," Jackie noted, "but I'm just the more visible part of it. Technically, I was the trailing spouse." With the difficulty of moving two academic careers, they felt lucky to find positions at Ohio State.

Patrick and Jackie had married in 1980 and have two children, a daughter and a son. Her daughter (born in 1982) had just graduated from Spelman in the spring of 2004, and the week before our interview, she had started a Master's of Public Health program at Emory. Jackie's son (born in 1984) was then a sophomore at Morehouse as a business major. I asked Jackie if she felt any of that empty-nest syndrome, but she explained that it "had been a pleasure to see . . . them move on with their lives." She clearly supported them not just as her children, but as their own people:

You know, I'm one that believes that people should grow into themselves, and they're doing exactly what people are supposed to be doing. They're getting on with their lives. If they were just sitting around twiddling their thumbs, I think that that would be just a little bit weird, but it's affirming for me to think that they are making their decisions and doing what they think that they want to do.

Patrick works as the Special Assistant to the Vice Provost for Minority Affairs at Ohio State, and Jackie said that she "had absolutely no problem teaching freshman comp," her first role at Ohio State, instead of the more heavily administrative roles she

had taken at Spelman. She explained that Ohio State has been a “good place to work” for her, with “lots of flexibility for what [she] can do.”

Still, those southern roots are a part of her, and I asked if she wanted to go back. She agreed, “When I retire, I’m going home. I love the South. The South is an incredible place. For me, Atlanta is home.” She observed that it was partly because she teaches and researches issues of identity, and so:

I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about . . . my most treasured parts of my own sense of identity, and one of them I’ve had to explain to my students is green and red. That’s geographical; in Georgia, you’ve got green trees and red hills. I feel more comfortable around green trees, rolling hills, and red earth. That’s when I feel at home. I actually get a physical charge when I’m in that space.

Knowing her fondness for small boxes and her affinity with the colors red and green, one of her graduate students gave her a small box with green and red stones inside, a gift Jackie cherishes not only because of the sweetness of the gesture, but also for its connection of “home” to her. She characterized the rolling hills of Atlanta as “like a sweater or a warm quilt or something. I like that nurturing aspect of the landscape.”

Having driven through both Atlanta and Ohio, I didn’t see that kind of landscape in Ohio at all. With such a strong attachment to the South, I wondered if she had difficulty being in Ohio. With the careful, patient voice I recognized as the voice in many of her writings, she illustrated her philosophy on that idea:

One of the things I try to do . . . is to appreciate where you are, just like you appreciate the moment that you’re in instead of living in the past or in

the future. I try to appreciate the place where I am. It took a while to adjust to a place as flat as Columbus, but I appreciate the place that it is. And what I appreciate more than that is that people who love it here *really* love it here. I admire things through the experiences of others, so I've come to appreciate Columbus as a place that other people love. What has helped is that I've found my part of it that makes me feel most at home. Where we live reminds me of the neighborhood that my husband and I lived in when I was in Atlanta because there *are* trees. They're not there all year as green. They turn brown, they have little gold and red leaves [she laughs], but much of the year, the neighborhood looks very much like my neighborhood at home. That gives me a little comfort. [Also] the thing about being in Columbus is that most people don't realize it's in a little valley. That's one of the reasons it's so flat. It's hillier if you go toward Cincinnati or Philly or if you go to Cleveland, so once you get out of the city of Columbus, it starts rolling just a little bit. So we've found a taste of home, and I appreciate that.

This was one aspect that I found so remarkable when visiting Jackie. Some people are very different "on the page" than they are in person. Jackie is not. When I read her works, she seemed so grounded and thoughtful about the world; when I sat with her, she was just as grounded and thoughtful in person, especially in the way she has chosen to not just tolerate the different environment in which she now lives but also to find the beauty and the comfort there.

Education, Teaching, and Administration

As mentioned, Jackie started her education at a young age. Following her 1970 graduation from Spelman, she finished in one year a master's degree at the University of Michigan in English Language with a minor emphasis in linguistics, at age 20. For a year following her master's work, she taught third grade back in her home county in Georgia. As Ballif, Davis, and Mountford report, Jackie decided against continuing her work in elementary school because she felt "only the best teachers should be elementary school teachers," like her mother, and Jackie did not consider herself in that category (253). Planning to go into journalism at the University of Michigan, Jackie taught freshman writing at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb the summer before starting the journalism program. In this teaching, she saw her interests in rhetoric and linguistics coming together in a way that helped students learn about writing. Instead of following her original plan about journalism, Jackie returned to the University of Michigan for graduate school, choosing to complete a Doctorate of Arts (D.A.) instead of a Ph.D. as that particular program allowed her more latitude in her coursework. She worked as a teaching fellow, graduating with a degree in English Language and a minor concentration in linguistics in 1975. After a one-year appointment at Clayton State College (a junior college at that time) in Forest Park, Georgia, she took a position at her alma mater, Spelman College.

In 1978, just two years into Jackie's work at Spelman as an Assistant Professor, she also accepted a position as the Assistant Dean of Freshman Studies. In 1981, she became the Associate Dean of Academic Advising and was promoted to Associate Professor that same year. She was a Research Associate for the Women's Research and

Resource Center from 1982 to 1983, and from 1983 to 1992, Jackie served as the Director of Spelman's Comprehensive Writing Program. In the summer of 1991, she was also on the faculty of the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College in Vermont, and delivered a keynote address there in the summer of 1994. When she left Spelman for Ohio State, where she started as a visiting professor in 1991, then an associate professor in 1992, it was just before she was to be promoted to full professor at Spelman, so the Ohio move did not come with full professor status. That didn't bother her, however, as she knew the differences between a Research 1 institution and the small liberal arts college, where teaching and administration had been the main cultural capital. Instead, at Ohio State, she explained, "Their expectations matched what I wanted to do, so I came here as an associate professor and got involved in the administration stuff that had been my life. I was asked to be the director of the Writing Center." Accepting the challenge of that position meant a delay for her own scholarship; although she was almost finished with *Traces of a Stream* when she arrived at Ohio State, "It took a good long time after I got here to finish. Things just drifted in a way that shifted my focus, and I didn't finish right away." Administrative work had very much been a part of her life. She noted that she had looked back over her career and realized that she had started very young and had been in administration for most of her career: "If I count just since leaving Michigan in 1975 to now, that's . . . almost 30 years. And so I have almost 27 years worth of some kind of administration experience." A large portion of that is program administration, such as the Writing Center work at Ohio State. But in addition to her Dean work at Spelman, at OSU, she has been a department vice chair, Senior Associate Dean of Research and Faculty Affairs, Interim Dean, Executive Dean and Senior Vice

Provost of the College of Humanities. She has also been a member of scores of departmental, local, regional, and national committees, and her *CV* shows six pages of honors and awards.

Sprinkled through our conversation had been Jackie's small side notes of giving me advice at this stage in my career, such as considerations in changing jobs, and then again at this point, when I asked her about the tension between administrative work and teaching. She repeated the feature of some of her publications: being generous with sharing what she's learned. For example, she advised that if I were to come to Ohio State for a job interview, "One of the things that I would say to you if I were the person that was interviewing you is that one of the decisions new faculty have to make is how it is that they will balance their time in a way that allows them to perform well across all measures of evaluation for the professoriate." As it had for her, though, Jackie explained, "As you go over the trajectory of your career, that balance shifts and changes. When I started at a small liberal arts college, the emphasis was on teaching, which is exactly where I wanted to be. I wanted to make myself into the very best teacher that I could be with the students that were before me." With her clear passion for teaching, I asked how she herself had balanced her roles. In spite of her many administrative positions, Jackie clarified, "I have always considered my primary professional identity to be 'teacher.' My first professional goal was to be the best writing teacher I could be, and I embraced that identity wholeheartedly. I wanted to do that. I wanted to be able to reach students that way and to provide positive experiences for them." In her administrative position, she had found that she wasn't able to balance teaching into her schedule. She had "one nightmare quarter" when she was teaching a graduate course along with full-time

administrative duties. The schedule became so hectic that she said she worried that she “would forget to go to a class because [her] day would be so complicated that [she would] forget.” She of course added, “I never did that. I actually looked forward to the class a lot. I enjoyed it tremendously, but it really did convince me that I didn’t have time to do it and there was no point in fooling myself into thinking that I could be all things to myself that I wanted to be.”

Part of why Jackie felt so uncomfortable in stretching herself so thin while teaching was her particular understanding of how teaching should be done: “In order for me to feel good about my sense of myself as a teacher, I have to feel that I’m able to put the kind of energy and enthusiasm in every single thing that, again, makes me say with absolute certainty that anybody who walks into my classroom door gets a good run for his or her money.” Jackie emphasized the “run for their money” phrase with squinted eyes and a pointed finger. Her whole demeanor changed, more focused and intent, and I could imagine being a student in her classroom, holding on to my seat with all I was learning. When I asked if she wanted to return to full-time teaching, she explained that she didn’t think she had that intense energy anymore and wouldn’t want to teach without it. In her “ideal world,” she would teach one or two classes at a time; she values the teacher part of herself and loves the work, but also gains from it: “In my view, there is nothing more intellectually stimulating than what happens in a good classroom between students that are alive and teachers that are trying to help them stay alive. No. I don’t ever want to give that up. I missed that more than anything about what I’m doing, because that’s where the *life* is.” As she views it, though, she has a “very facilitating style. I don’t really teach anybody anything. I think I make it possible for students to learn.”

Although she explains that her “work was always in composition, [her] research was always in rhetoric.” Based on her training and her research interests, she called herself “a language person.” She explained further:

I was always interested in the way that people used language, and I came to understand that my primary interest there was in the way in which African American women use language. I was in a women’s institution [at Spelman], and that got clearer and clearer to me. That context was a meaningful one for me. That research interest was not what I was getting paid to do, and so the shift in balance then was I was working on teaching, and I was called upon to do administrative service for the institution, the department, and professional organizations.

One of the advantages of moving to Ohio State was the support of a Research 1 institution. She felt that it was the time in her career to shift that balance toward more research. The move was clearly fruitful for her; since 1992, Jackie authored or co-authored at least 17 peer-reviewed articles, 14 book chapters, and wrote or edited 19 books, in addition to delivering over 40 presentations and addresses.

Experience with CCCC

During that same period of intense publishing, Jackie was also chair of CCCC. She had been involved with the executive committee long before that. She first attended the conference in 1977, when a friend from graduate school suggested it, and soon became involved through the people she met there. She felt it was particularly important for her as an African American woman, telling me, “What you still have to see with 4Cs is it’s an overwhelmingly white organization.” However, she observed, “It was a way of

introducing me to a professional group that allowed me immediately to see that there was a possibility of a space not just for a person like me but my kind of interests in the African American movement, in cultural studies, in gender studies, and in language, not literature.” When I asked her about becoming chair of CCCC, she explained that she was first asked to run for the executive committee, and served two years on that. When David Bartholomae was chair (his program was in 1987), Jackie served as his local arrangements chair. She was then asked to run for secretary on the executive committee; she served for two years and was re-elected for another two years. She was away from CCCC leadership for only six months when she was asked to run for chair. With those commitments totaled, she was on the executive committee of CCCC in some capacity for a total of 10 years. Of this remarkable length of service, she emphasized, “I came to believe that that’s too long. I think that nobody should really do it for that long. While I wouldn’t change that experience or change having done it that way, it did teach me that I don’t recommend it for anybody else. It was too much.” In addition to the length of time, the year she was chair was also contentious, as she had to manage a rift between NCTE and CCCC (the nature of which she didn’t discuss). There was also a computer system crash the year she planned the program, so she had to start over and do it all by hand, as Jane Peterson had. That year she called “my year from hell.” Unlike Jane’s experience, though, Jackie had support from Ohio State, and she was quick to note, “What I say without a shadow of a doubt is that I would not have survived as the same woman if I hadn’t been in a place like this because of the resources here. If I had been at Spelman, I would not have gotten very good support. I didn’t have graduate students, I didn’t have the kind of set up that you have at a research university.” Overall, though, she thought the

resultant program went well. When she finally left the executive committee in 1996, she said that she felt she knew everybody.

With such an extensive background in institutional administration and her time with CCCC, I asked Jackie how she thought the two overlapped. She first commented on the nature of being a writing teacher, reflecting, “Sometimes it’s hard for people to believe that we really do like being writing teachers or teachers of undergraduate students or that we wouldn’t just as soon write our book.” Of course she didn’t agree with that, but she did say that she feels those in comp/rhet are often well-suited to be administrators: “We’re nice people. We are cooperative with student centers. We facilitate things. We try to be helpful.” I told Jackie that I have always had an image in my head of being a composition teacher as being like the Rosie the Riveter of the English department. She shared her own image:

We’re kind of the worker bees. We know that there are jobs to be done, we don’t mind doing them, we have the skills to try to get them done in, and we know how to work with other people to maximize whatever it is. There is something, in other words, about our field that has nurtured that sense of things. It may be that we as people who have chosen the field have brought certain patterns of action to the discipline and we found comfortable ways of getting better at what we were already trying to do. In a sense, we *are* kind of worker bees. We do stuff.

But again, she noted that we have to have balance. Handing me another bit of her wisdom, she counseled, “With those kinds of tendencies, what I think you have to learn is

to say no. Saying no for people like us is often something that's not automatic, because we just agree to do things." But learning to say "no" was a clear lesson.

Considering her generous spirit of giving advice, I asked her if she had any mentors herself. Most important to her has been her mother: "I consider my mother my primary mentor. She is the person who has been an excellent advisor in life for me." Although she has had strong professional friendships, she did not feel she had mentors in the traditional sense we consider now. Part of it was the time period: "In some ways, I think people of my generation have had to make ourselves, or make ourselves in the company of people like us." Within her friends, often outside her own discipline, she did feel she had learned a great deal. She also mentioned the kind of learning or experience she has gained from a sort of kairos: "I've had people with whom I have had no real relationship with at all who by convergence of moments, you get the right conversation at just the right time [These were] kind of life-changing moments or things that kind of burrow in [to you] in a way that became increasingly significant." Overall, though, she believed she hadn't received a more formal kind of mentoring, which, much as Anne Ruggles Gere said she felt, is why she now finds it so important. She explained, "That [lack of mentoring], in fact, is what has made me more passionate about trying to be a mentor for other people. I think that people need folks to be in their corner. To share what they share." This sharing could be formal or more casual, as when she offered to answer questions for me and share her experiences.

Leaving Ohio State University

Regrettably, the time slot Jackie had managed to find for us was almost over. After I packed up, Jackie asked her assistant to take our picture together inside Jackie's

office. As I had with Anne, I left Jackie with more of an understanding about why others had mentioned her in such positive terms. Because this interview was one of the last I conducted on my overall list, I had the benefit of perspective and comparison. Jackie is much how she described “us compositionists”: that we’re “worker bees,” “nice people,” and “we get things done.” Sometimes those qualities can be overlooked or undervalued in the academy. But Jackie’s embodiment of these qualities has allowed her to contribute immensely to the fields of rhetoric and composition. As kind and accommodating as she is, though, Jackie is certainly not a push-over. Her quiet, insistent strength drives her research, her teaching, her work as an administrator, and clearly her nature as a human being. As I had noticed with Lillian, Jackie fully embraces the space around her, both literal and metaphorical. After our meeting, it was completely clear to me that respect for Jackie Royster is well deserved.

Thinking back to her openness and generosity, I picture those small boxes on her shelves that she loves so much. Jackie’s research focus is very defined; with some other scholars, this focus could have become an overworked idea that became repetitive, even redundant. Such an approach would be like the walls of those small boxes, holding tightly to one line of thinking, thus “boxing in” the scholarship. But Jackie’s focus is more kaleidoscopic, as she mentions in *Traces of a Stream*. By focusing less on the potential “walls” of her ideas, she sees the many aspects of spaciousness within her research. She considers those boxes as representative of the type of spiritual and scholarly renewal she is able to purposefully create amidst her extremely busy days. For her, those boxes are not a narrowing to one idea, but an opening to new spaces for her to explore and somehow make larger. In the landscape of Ohio, away from her sense of her “real home”

in Atlanta, and in the important work of administration, away from her joy in teaching, Jackie has found controlled spots of openness in which to do the scholarship she loves.

“Community colleges are an essential part of our recovery in the present—and our prosperity in the future. [They] can make the future better, not just for . . .

individuals but for America.”

Barack Obama, “Remarks”

CHAPTER 6

NELL ANN PICKETT

Hinds Community College, Mississippi

I came into Mississippi from South Carolina, following I-20 around the fast-moving, congested traffic of Atlanta and then through Alabama. The night before I met with Nell Ann Pickett, I stayed in Jackson, Mississippi, on the outskirts of the city. While looking for the hotel, though, I took a wrong turn and ended up driving through downtown Jackson, a hot, steamy jungle of barred windows and potholes. I eventually found my way to the hotel, which I had booked online, and groaned to find it was the motel type, with door entries directly from the parking lot—not the safest choice for a woman traveling alone. The parking lot itself was a desolate stretch of cracked blacktop, heat waves rising to burn the few scraggly bushes planted around it. I checked in, though, and found my second-floor room tucked into a dark corner, near the clunking and humming of the vending and ice machines. The lock felt weak, but I was exhausted, so I pushed a large recliner in front of the door, cranked up the air conditioner, and dove down into the coolness of \$50/night sheets, hoping both for the heavy use of bleach and for some much needed rest.

The next morning, the shock upon leaving that cool cave was tremendous, with the brick wall of Mississippi heat and too-bright light almost flattening me. Soon I had

my car air conditioner on full blast, and I was on my way to Raymond, Mississippi, and Hinds Community College. The drive is less than 20 miles, but the change is drastic, from Jackson's urban streets and a population of just over 130,000, to the decidedly rural countryside of Raymond and its 1,600 or so residents. The school, though, is one of the largest community colleges in Mississippi, providing education to over 19,000 students. This area is where Nell Ann Pickett started in life, and it was to here that she returned.

Scholarly Work: A Partial Overview

Technical Communication

Pickett has been on the forefront of teaching and researching technical writing since the beginning of her teaching career, particularly as it is taught to students in community colleges or at the freshman or sophomore level. In "A Quarter Century and Beyond: My Story of Teaching Technical Communication," published in the collection *Two-Year College English: Essays for a New Century* (1994), edited by Mark Reynolds, Pickett relates how she started in the field of teaching technical writing, including her textbook work, her approaches to the task, and her involvement with several organizations, and offers some reflections on her view of technical communication at that time. Pickett starts by outlining what she learned in the publication process of her textbook, *Technical English: Reading, Speaking, and Writing*, with Ann Laster. Although Pickett had no specific training in teaching technical writing when her department chair first her asked to take the course, she brought her own practical experience: "I was a farmer who could drive a tractor, calculate dusting for bollworm infestation, and work cattle." This kind of can-do attitude helped both her and Laster, who had similar experience, to seek out the appropriate materials for the course. Because they couldn't

find a textbook that would work for their first- and second-year students, they started by creating their own handouts. They visited businesses and industries, spoke with technical instructors, including sitting in on their classes and meetings. Pickett explains:

We interviewed technicians on the job; we collected examples of all types of technical writing wherever we went, from the state fair to the county health office to the department stores; we read, we assimilated, and we read, and we talked with each other and professionals in the field, and we read. (138)

Using this material, they created distinct units, and spiral bound the collection of handouts so it would be easier for students to use. Eventually, publishing representatives began coming to them, asking about their book. Initially, though, Pickett emphasizes that they weren't trying to write a book, but trying to help their students. Writing a book "would have been as foreign as winning an Olympic Gold Medal in gymnastics. What we were trying to do was prepare our technical students for their communication needs when they would enter the job market in the next one or two years" (138).

The story of publishing this textbook is one she relates in several works, including in her CCCC Chair address and in our interview, which I discuss later. She and Laster faced unpleasant editorial demands to make changes to portions of the text about which they felt very strongly. Pickett explains that she and Laster had "already given in. . . — against our better judgment—to one unshakable requirement of the editor," that of the voicing in the text. In their original version, Pickett and Laster had written in the second person, directly addressing their student audience as "you." This "informal, friendly tone" (135) was considered too unorthodox for a textbook, and so they left it out. In the next

edition, published in 1975, they restored the original voice, noting, “We had learned a good bit about trusting our own sense of what speaks to students in print.” Pickett further explains, “And I think the editor was learning a thing or two about community college audiences and involving the students in the reading process” (135). This textbook became the “first book designed specifically for freshman and sophomore introductory courses in technical writing.” At the time of Pickett writing the article, the textbook had sold “nearly a half million copies” (136) and was in its sixth edition. The text is currently in its 8th edition.

In addition to both the learning and personal gains, Pickett emphasizes that she has benefitted enormously from several organizations of which she has been a part. As she explains, “Most of us enjoy the company of people we like, and often we like the people we get to know—particularly when there is an immediate common bond.” (This idea is particularly striking to me as I argue that we need to make our bonds more personal, as discussed in the upcoming conclusion.) That common bond of technical writing brought her to three organizations: The Southeastern Conference in English in the Two-Year College (SCTEC); the NCTE Committee on Technical and Scientific Communication; and The Association of Teachers of Technical Writing. Pickett feels that her “growth as a teacher of technical communication, as a professional, as a person, is inexorably intertwined with the growth and development of SCETC (which eventually reformed as TYCA, the Two-Year College Association. Of all the entities that have shaped [her] life, none has been more influential than SCETC.” Pickett has remained steadfastly loyal to this professional connection. Since her first attendance of the conference, in 1968, Pickett explains that she has only missed one SCETC conference

since that time, in 1970, while she had taken leave to go back to graduate school. SCETC is one of six regional conferences organized by CCCC, but its format is more open: “Almost anyone who wishes to be on a program as presenter, preside, or recorder or reader of one’s own imaginative writing can do so” (139). Pickett clearly recalls her first conference presentation in 1971, at “the Tutwiler Hotel, Birmingham, Alabama.” She and Laster presented on “The Technical English Program,” and Pickett speculates that their presentation may have been the beginning of a large portion of the conference, the section on technical communication. In SCETC, Pickett found friends, ideas, and most importantly, “a professional home” (140).

Pickett also recalls her first meeting at NCTE for people who teach technical writing, in the early 1970s. She felt welcomed, but didn’t realize until later that the meeting was intended for those who were already members of that committee. She was soon asked to become a member, and “since then, [she] has served continuously, including a term as chair, 1985 to 1987, on the NCTE Committee on Technical and Scientific Communication.” She was concerned, though, by the lack of participation by two-year college members; she tried recruiting, but realized that, with a three-year term expected and a commitment to annual attendance, and with community colleges rarely providing a travel budget, two-year teachers were effectively shut out.

The next meeting Pickett recalls is her attendance to a session at CCCC on technical writing. All the attendees were male, and they asked if she and Laster were lost, a fact they still laugh about. The small group attending that session eventually formed the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW). Once again, Pickett and Laster were the only two-year college members. Pickett served as secretary-treasurer, the title of

which changed to Executive Secretary-Treasurer as the membership and the responsibilities grew. Pickett held this position for ten years, from 1977 to 1986 and also served on the editorial board for the journal *The Technical Writing Teacher*, which later became *The Technical Communication Quarterly*. In 1985, Pickett became both the first two-year college instructor and first woman to be inducted as a member into the ATTW Society of Fellows.

With such a strong background in the history of both two-year schools and technical writing, Pickett ends with her personal reflections about technical communication's status through five main points. First, to two-year college teachers, she urges: "Believe in yourself . . . invest in yourself [by attending meetings] . . . and make your voice heard." Second, she explains that when she and Laster first started, few women taught in the field of technical communications ; however, "by 1992, ATTW had about an equal number of male and female members." To those members, she describes in her third point a week-long "Summer Institute in Technical Communication" that has been held at Hinds Community College since 1981. At the time of the article's publication, this was the only such Institute in existence, and has always been the only one originally directed by women. In her fourth point, she forecasts that technical writing will continue to be central at two-year colleges, perhaps growing toward majors in technical writing, but also focusing on continuing education for students already working who want a change or enhancement of their careers. Finally, Pickett forecasts that technical writing will soon boast more and better prepared instructors than in the past. She explains that when she is asked why she has remained so involved in technical

communications, she responds that through this work, she has found her best friend, Ann Laster, her husband, and a “discipline that [offers] such a rich life” (142-43).

Pickett also contributes to the teaching of technical communication through studying the practices in the field. She and Faye Angelo published “Technical Communication in the Two-Year College: A Survey” (1986), the results for which were also presented at three separate conferences in 1985 and 1986. Their goal was to “determine current conditions and practices in the teaching of technical communication in two-year colleges,” conclusions about which they drew from a nationwide survey conducted in from 1984 to 1985. Using lists from MLA and from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges to find two-year colleges, Pickett and Angelo sent questionnaires to 1,202 institutions across the country, 897 of which (74.6%) responded; 565 of these indicated actual courses in technical communication (126). Through the survey, Pickett and Angelo were able to provide a picture of technical communication at that time, including the number and type of courses offered, the most frequently used textbooks, the main emphases of study, and the priorities placed on these courses within institutions.

Pickett and Angelo followed up on this study in 1986 with “Teachers of Technical Communication in Two-Year Colleges: Who, Why, When, and With What Results.” Using information from 136 teachers of technical communication at 87 two-year colleges, Pickett and Angelo present summaries of demographic characteristics, teaching experience, work load, and how the teachers began teaching tech comm. From this data, the authors discuss points of interest and concern: the disparity between male and female teacher salaries; the extensive teaching experience of most technical communication

teachers; the heavy workload (about 15.7 teaching hours per term for full-time faculty, in addition to other duties); half of the teachers began teaching technical communication because of their own interest in the subject, helping to design the course either with or without pay, although few had received formal training in the area; a large number of those teaching technical communication also had experience teaching at the secondary or elementary levels; and although a small number of these teachers themselves also do technical writing for pay (perhaps due to institutional restrictions), many continue to participate in professional development activities and perceive themselves as highly qualified and committed to this teaching. The surveys Pickett and Angelo conducted allow other technical communication teachers to understand their own colleagues on a national basis. Furthermore, the authors assert that the numbers help the larger field of English, which often overlooks both two-year and technical communication efforts by the relative lack of two-year representation in articles appearing in major journals and in presentations accepted at large, non specialized conferences.

The Mission of Community Colleges

In addition to her championing of technical communication, Pickett has devoted her professional life to the growth and promotion of community colleges, particularly Hinds Community College, from which she and some of her family also graduated. Her Chair's address to the CCCC convention, "The Two-Year Community College as Democracy in Action," embodies her strong beliefs about education in the two-year college setting. Using both statistics and personal stories, she declares her commitment to the kind of education she brings to two-year college students. Pickett begins, "I am a graduate of a two-year college, and I am proud of it" (90). Pickett uses an anecdote about

one student in the opening paragraphs to help her illustrate that “the two-year college is the bringer of dreams to hundreds of thousands of persons across this country.” The story is of a student in his mid-twenties who enrolled in HCC a month after he was released from jail on a drug charge; when he started, Pickett explains he was “afraid [and] . . . ashamed, . . . [with] grave doubts about his future.” Two years later, though, having studied at a “college that would take him in,” the student graduated with an A.S. degree and planned to transfer to a state college. Because of stories like his and several others, including her own, Pickett chose the title of her piece, “democracy in action” (90-91). Pickett explains that after teaching for four years at a university, she began teaching at HCC in 1966, from which she had graduated ten years earlier. She writes, “To this day, I have the 3 x 5 cards on which I had written the valedictory address I gave at graduation.”

Her goal in her CCCC Chair address was to explain how the assignment she was given to teach technical communication at HCC “shaped [her] life . . . and continues to shape it,” even though she has taught a wide variety of courses. The technical writing course is required for most majors seeking to attain the A.S. degree, with most students planning to “enter the workforce upon completion of the program at Hinds” (91). She also notes that most of the students work at least one job and take up to five years or more to complete the two-year curriculum. Like most two-year schools, HCC also offers classes at night and at other locations, often to older, part-time students, thus “taking education to the people” (92)—one of the ways that this work is democracy in action. She tells of a 32-year-old man who went back to school to find something beyond his current job, using him as just one example of a statistic about HCC: Of its 13,000 students, half are 27 or older.

Further, Pickett reveals, “Currently, approximately ten million people across the nation are enrolled in both credit and noncredit courses in two-year colleges” and that “there are approximately 1300 community colleges strategically located within 25 miles of 95 percent of the nation’s population base.” In Mississippi alone at that time, 69% of first-year students were at a community college, and 54% of all college students were enrolled in a community college. Pickett explains that Mississippi has the oldest state-wide community college system in the country, emerging in the 1920s from agricultural high schools. As with many systems at that time, the cost to attend a community college for a semester was roughly one-third of that same semester at a state school. Additionally, the Mississippi state community college system represents a large number of minority and women students (92-93).

To illustrate the personal side of these numbers, Pickett introduces another student, a 39-year-old woman taking Technical Writing II that semester. Married very young and now with three children, the student was aiming for a paralegal degree and was already the accountant for her husband’s office. This student set high goals for herself. She had decided that, for her, a grade lower than an *A* would mean she hadn’t learned everything she could have in that course. Using these stories of community-college students and their often more complicated lives than traditional students (jobs, families, more financial obligations) helps Pickett to explain how this also affects the way community colleges teachers must respond: “Syllabi, assignment sheets, paper-due dates, students conferences, portfolio reviews—these are always fluid.” Without this willingness to be flexible, Pickett explains, “We lose the student. And the student loses contact with formal education and training—at least for the time being.” As a two-year

college teacher, Pickett acknowledges the difficulties of such flexibility, but also asserts that it is absolutely necessary in that setting.

Her next anecdote involves a frustration she herself experienced, that of producing the textbook *Technical English: Writing, Reading, and Speaking*. In addition to the editorial problems with using “you” in the textbook, Pickett explains additional problems in “A Quarter Century and Beyond.” For example, the publisher wanted to include an introduction by a more established, male professor; they wanted to remove Pickett and Laster’s full names and use only initials; and they wanted to leave the name of the school out of it entirely. To each urgent request, Pickett and Laster responded firmly in the negative. The book was published, although belatedly, and it remained in the form Pickett and Laster had requested. At its over 8 million copies, it clearly sold well. From this incident, Pickett learned some of the biases inherent in the publishing industry about female writers and junior colleges (as HCC was called at the time); she also learned that her pride in her school and both authors’ stubbornness in defending their convictions could prevail.

Pickett then tells the story of how she came to be involved in the Two-Year College Association (TYCA). At the suggestion of her chair, Jim El Byrd Harris, she attended a TYCA conference in Biloxi, Mississippi (a conference now known as TYCA-Southeast) in 1968. She thought going to an interesting meeting with “several hundred people” on the Gulf Coast in the middle of winter sounded perfect. However, Biloxi was hit by a rare snowstorm that stopped all travel in the deep South, and the conference turned out to have about 36 attendees. While there, Pickett met the featured speaker, Elisabeth McPherson (who was honored with the Nell Ann Pickett award in 1996, which

will be discussed in more detail later). Even though that meeting of TYCA wasn't quite what Pickett expected, she has returned to regional meetings every year since, having found a place for "informative sessions, learning, sharing, belonging, [and] a professional home. That home in TYCA became part of the CCCC community in 1965.

Pickett then turns to another student example to help her illustrate the value of the two-year college. After the 43-year-old student lost her job as an insurance executive, she was faced with finding a new way of taking care of her family, as her income had been the main source of support for her husband and young son. After attending a career seminar at a two-year college, she rediscovered an interest in medicine, and pursued an A.S. in nursing. After graduating, she had a job within a week. Her family's lifestyle changed, but the student learned not only new skills, but also that she "will never again put work first" (97). Pickett uses this example to assert the American Association of Community Colleges' main goals: to be "accessible to virtually all Americans;" to "provide diverse programs and services," and to "receive high ratings from employers for the quality of programs and for programs and program responsiveness to employer needs." As she closes her speech, Pickett "salutes" all the students who are like the examples she mention and the community colleges that helped them realize their dreams. She claims, "Community colleges are open door, they are accessible, they are affordable, they are cost efficient, they offer a broad array of programs and services, and they open the way for transferring to four-year institutions or entering/reentering the workforce." Because these schools really do allow people to have the "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" that are at the basis of our democracy, "community colleges are indeed democracy in action" (98).

As another way of serving the two-year college mission, Pickett served as the editor of *TETYC*, the journal *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, from 1988 to 1994. During her time with the journal, she worked hard to foster inclusiveness. She created two new sections: “What Concerns Me” and “What Works for Me,” reflecting her own practical nature. Both sections were shorter than the other articles in the journal, thus creating a place for more voices and a chance for more teachers to publish. In one of her editorial letters for the journal, “Working with Green Lumber,” Pickett reflects on work she had done over the summer on her farm: “building a catchpen for working beef cattle.” She explains:

I used green lumber from a local mill: 500 ft of 1” x 8” x 16’ oak
Each board weighed about thirty pounds—tough and unwieldy for these two hands. As the boards air dried, however, they became lighter and thus much easier to work with. As the boards continue to dry and weather, they become stronger and more durable. A well planned catchpen built from green oak and properly maintained will last a lifetime Building with green lumber is what we do as teachers Work the green lumber with care (“Building” 171).

Pickett often brings the lessons of her farm to her reflections on teaching. Recalling another summer, she writes about sitting in her back porch swing one evening, listening to frogs—she had “identified 11 frog-song species on our farm” (of the 28 recorded in Mississippi). She noted that such time on her farm, working and listening to the world, “invite[s] a reunion with what’s really important in life.” But she continues:

For ultimate renewal, I return to the classroom—the classroom. Students. Exploring ideas. Healthy give-and-take discussions The challenge—students making connections between what goes on in the classroom and what is important to them. Through sharing and a genuine respect for the dignity of every person, we can all find renewal. (“Views” 163)

With her own passion for teaching, Pickett both lived and promoted the community college work she believed was so crucial to the fabric of post-secondary education.

Interview: A Conversation with Nell Ann Pickett

Although the enrollment at the school is high, the Hinds Community College campus is small and quite beautiful, with brightly flowering myrtle bushes and the dark greens of the Deep South. That morning, it was also already intensely hot outside, and I was glad to enter the coolness of the library where Nell Ann and I had planned to meet. The original library was housed in the first campus building, constructed in 1917. The library where we would meet was constructed in 1965 (“President McLendon, II”), but it had the feel of a much older building, with slightly squeaky floor boards, wide moldings around the doors, and French doors separating the rooms. I had no picture of Nell Ann, nor she of me, but I carried my “Writers and Teachers” tote bag as definite clue, as I would throughout the journey, and somehow I knew that we would recognize one another. Eventually, in walked a much shorter woman than I had anticipated, a good five inches under my own 5’4”, but with a decidedly assured presence. She was dressed casually in beige pants and a t-shirt sporting a large American flag and the phrase “Bring

our Troops Home,” and when we shook hands, I felt the large, strong grip of a woman who had worked hard at much more in her life than teaching.

Childhood and Family

Nell Ann grew up near the Hinds campus in a large family with eight children. Since she was born in 1935, I was curious if she had felt any gender constraints during her upbringing. On the contrary, Nell Ann explained that gender roles were not strictly defined for her. Her parents believed that both the boys and girls should have a variety of experiences. In fact, the family relied on all the children to help keep the family farm going. Nell Ann elaborated:

My brothers learned to cook; I learned to milk a cow. My sisters didn't too much like working on a farm, but I learned to drive a tractor when I was in the second grade [because] that year [we] had extra good crop. Even though I was small, short, I could stand up and reach the clutch and the brake. [My] driving tractor saved my parents from having to hire another person. My parents sent word [to school] that I was needed at home to work on the farm that week, [to drive] the tractor . . . to get in the corn. My teacher just laughed and laughed. She said, “Who did you get to write this note for you? You know you don't know how to drive a tractor.”

It was only at school, then, where Nell Ann learned that not everyone believed a girl could do anything. For example, when she was in eighth grade (with a teacher, Miss Curtis, who taught her for five different grades and who was a noted role model), Nell Ann wrote a composition about wanting to be a lawyer or a teacher when she grew up. To help her, Miss Curtis arranged for Nell Ann to meet two members of the state legislature,

a male and a female. To Nell Ann's surprise, she wasn't encouraged to follow her dream, as she had usually been:

This man I met—and I don't know why I listened to him—but he said, “Women shouldn't be lawyers.” And I will never, ever forget that. ... So I told him I was also interested in being a teacher. And then the female legislator said, ‘Teaching and law could go hand in hand. You can do both.’ So then, I thought I was really most interested in teaching English.

Nell Ann marked this as her main encounter with gender stereotyping. After all, in 1916, her grandfather had bought a school bus, and he taught her then sixteen-year-old mother to drive it so she could take herself and all the kids to school. Nell Ann's grandfather believed that both his sons and daughters should learn how to ride a horse and drive an automobile. Likely following up on this belief, Nell Ann's own parents encouraged all their children in whatever direction suited them or according to what was needed.

A farming life can certainly instill a work ethic, but Nell Ann's parents also seemed to instill a sense of personal industry. The children were given allowances, but they were also encouraged to find their own projects, which may have started Nell Ann on a path of lifetime enterprising. To make extra money, the children had a variety of options:

We could raise some bees, we could milk the cow, we could make butter.

We had our customers in town to sell eggs and butter to. In the summer time, if we wanted to raise vegetables, we could do that, and we could take them to town to sell out of the back of the truck or to the grocery store.

And, particularly on Saturdays, we'd bring watermelons and cantaloupes into town and sell those.

With her money, Nell Ann remembered starting a first bank account in around the 8th grade, and in fact, she is still a customer of that same bank. Between her teachers and her parents, Nell Ann was treated with respect and with a sense that she could do whatever she encountered. After her father was one of the first to forest his land ("Daddy could look at half a dozen trees and tell you how many four foot boards would come from that"), he obtained more land as well as cattle. The farm totaled 1,100 acres in all, and her father divided the land between his eight children. Nell Ann still lives on a parcel of the land on which she was raised, about fifteen miles from the school.

Education, Teaching, and Administration

After Nell Ann graduated from Hinds Community College, she attended school at the University of Mississippi, majoring in English and eventually earning a Master's, with which she started her teaching at HCC. She took a sabbatical to return to school, earning her Ph.D. in 1977, with her dissertation *A Comparison of Characteristics Desired by College English Teachers in a Composition Handbook with Characteristics of Recent Composition Handbooks*. This research in handbooks clearly served her well when she and Ann Laster created their textbook; although she relates the story in more than one publication, she told it to me again with some additional details. When she realized that she didn't have a textbook suitable for her students, Nell Ann did what good teachers know to do: she researched and she improvised. She called on her experience teaching high school in Rolling Rock, Mississippi, where she created an English course that allowed her young, male students to work within the topic they knew and loved: farming.

The course was named Vocational English, with the more straightforward definition of “vocational” than many of its versions now. As she planned to teach technical writing at Hinds, she researched how to teach the class by contacting people in technical fields such as engineering, agriculture, and health related fields, finding materials from the County Extension offices, and then just by asking students to think in the most practical ways possible about the work they did and wanted to do. From there, she and Ann started writing assignments. In Nell Ann’s retelling, the determination and resourcefulness of both women became clear:

We started to do some assignments like asking—let’s say the students in agriculture—what are some things that these students who major in agriculture, particularly in farming [would do] . . . perhaps thinking about continuing in the tradition [of their families]: raising cattle, raising cotton, soybeans. So, I visited with the county extension person . . . from Mississippi State University, . . . and I got a lot of materials, things that the everyday farmer would find handy, about how to rotate crops, some things about the reason for worming cattle, just some basic things, and I set up a lot of assignments on “how to do.” How would you explain to your high school brother who is sixteen years of age how to dehorn an animal? . . . [We told the students]: Interview some people. Get your father to help you. Take some pictures if you could. Do some drawings, some illustrations that you can use.

Taking this practical approach with a deep knowledge of her students in mind, Nell Ann and Ann put their textbook together with one of the old purple mimeograph

machines. Nell Ann insists that the book “came about as sort of an accident in a sense as many good things in life do.” Clearly, though, this accident was the product of a great deal of hard work and a large dose of that “common sense” she learned through her very practical background.

Consulting technical experts is also where Nell Ann met her future husband, Harry Partin, her Hinds Community college colleague, who taught in the engineering department. As they worked, Nell explained:

Harry Partin and I became even closer friends. So we thought we might as well make this thing serious. I’d never been married before, and he’d been married, but was divorced. So there I was a few years later, getting married at 40 and it was his marriage for a second time, he was 49. And we just had a wonderful, wonderful marriage together, we loved to travel and do everything together.

Later in her conversation, Nell Ann revealed, “I didn’t think much about getting married until I met Harry. Then when he asked him to marry me, I fainted. I really did. We had a lot of fun over that.” Her eyes turned soft as she told me that Harry died from liver cancer in July of 1999, and how they spent their last months together talking, looking at slides of their travels, and remembering. She continues to travel on her own now, her most recent trip being at that time a “DaVinci Code tour.” Her next planned trip was of the rivers of Europe. The prospect of more traveling made her speak more quickly and gesticulate with excitement.

Toward the end of our conversation, I asked Nell Ann, as I did all my participants, if I hadn’t asked something I should have. She replied that many people had asked her

about never having had children. I had learned by this time that I wasn't able to have children, and so I was interested to hear about a woman feeling quite fulfilled in her job and marriage without a "family of her own." Nell Ann explained that her nieces and nephews, and now grand-nieces and grand-nephews have taken this place of children in her life. Shortly before our interview, the Hinds campus had renamed a building as Pickett Hall, in honor of both her and her family's significant contributions to the college. At the dedication ceremony, Nell Ann asked two of her young nephews to be her escorts. The honor of the building was not just to her many years of teaching, but also to the considerable financial support she and her sisters have established through grants and scholarships. With the nephews with her that day and several nieces living nearby, Nell Ann indeed feels the warmth and support of family.

One nephew in particular became an even closer part of her family many years earlier. When her nephew was a young teenager, he and his mother, Nell Ann's sister, were traveling toward the Raymond area to see the family. They were in an old Volkswagen Beetle and hit a large hole in the road, which flipped the car over. Her sister was killed, but her nephew was thrown to safety. From that time, she shared custody of her nephew with her parents. Her description of how they were able to manage it is a lesson in how it takes a village—or a small southern town—to raise a child. Teachers stayed late, neighbors kept watch, and Hinds Community College gave Nell Ann support in this new role. Her nephew now has a Ph.D. in History, perhaps showing the influence of the aunt who raised him.

Experience with CCCC

Nell Ann found her way to CCCC through a Two-Year College Regional in 1967, then in its second year. She has attended ever since. Her chair, El-Byrd Harris, wanted her to become involved in NCTE as well, so she went to an NCTE meeting in the late sixties as well, with her first attendance at the only time the conference was held in Hawaii. (She laughs about this: “At that time going to Honolulu, going to the Hawaiian Islands, was like going to the moon.”) She and a few other teachers attended their first CCCC in the late ‘60s or early ‘70s (she did not quite remember the year.) They made some sandwiches and drove to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend.

From that time, Pickett worked hard to establish equal footing for two-year colleges in both NCTE and CCCC. Part of her work with these annual meetings was to both raise awareness of and respect for the two-year college community:

The two-year school people [were] saying that we ought to be treated equally as the other entities under the NCTE umbrella The middle school people were pushing for equal voice. Actually, the entire structure of NCTE was rethought. All of us are always growing, hopefully, and recognizing that maybe we thought we had been all inclusive, but some people had really been marginalized . . . until we’d come to the standpoint to be sure that all ethnic groups and all races could be on an equal footing with all other groups, ethnic groups, other religious groups or whatever—but everybody has a voice.

Thirty years later, Nell Ann became one of the more prominent voices as the program chair of CCCC in 1996.

As part of her work with TYCA and CCCC, Nell Ann worked on a committee in 1994 to create an award for a two-year college faculty member, one who has made:

a major impact on the two-year-college professionalism . . . [and makes] positive contributions to professional leadership with a clearly national reach and an inclusive vision demonstrated in such activities as mentoring, publication, or work uniting the goals and efforts of organizations and groups that promote two-year colleges, [and who has] demonstrated past or present excellence in teaching which exemplifies such outstanding personal qualities as creativity, sensitivity, and leadership.

The other members of the committee dubbed this award the Nell Ann Pickett Award, and in 1994, she was its first recipient; it has been presented yearly since then. Nell Ann credits her continual work with national two-year-college issues and her years as TETYC editor as part of the reason she was asked to run for and was elected to the CCCC Chair position. Having her name put on the ballot in the first place came through a similar process as others have: someone suggested it. In this case, Nell Ann refers to Anne Ruggles Gere as a mentor and someone she admires deeply: “Anne is just a wonderful human being . . . But the real reason that I admire Anne Ruggles Gere as much as I do is this: to my knowledge, those . . . things like cliques in an organization, she is about as free from that as a person can be.” Gere preceded Nell’s leadership by four years, and with this kind of example, Nell Ann began her work as Chair.

In the final portion of our discussion, Nell Ann explained that she felt being active in the field was almost a duty:

I hear people say, “The reason I can’t go to meeting, [especially] to national meetings is I can’t afford to pay my own way.” I can certainly identify with that. *But*. That is an investment into the profession, an investment into yourself. Fortunately, I’ve been able to do whatever I needed to do, and I’ve always paid my own way to the various meetings and as a part of an investment in the profession. And along with this, I’ve . . . contributed to scholarships. Students: I believe in, and participating in faculty development. And I’ve funded some professional grants and been very pleased that I’ve been able to do that.

Nell Ann’s fervent commitment to the two-year college mission is remarkable. As we talked, she leaned toward me, a hand outstretched, and emphasized:

I truly believe with all my being that in the history of this country, that’s going to be one of the greatest contributions to higher education in the world, the development of two year colleges and the mission of the two year college In the spectrum, there’s a place for anybody. Because I believe with my whole being that any honest work is respectable and is to be honored.

This passionate belief has led Nell Ann to be a significant part of the field of comp-rhet. Six years past her retirement, I caught up with her again at CCCC in 2009, and she was as full of life and laughter as ever.

Leaving Hinds Community College

Following our interview, Nell Ann wanted me to see her home, so I followed her the ten miles or so to her place, tucked back into the trees with a large fenced pasture

adjacent. We were hoping to find her dog, Bear, a Great Pyrenees; I'm sure he would have outweighed her and she probably could have ridden him, but Bear was apparently off visiting at one of her sisters' nearby places. After a tour of her pasture land, a pond from which she still fishes, and a peek at a few of her small herd of cattle, we returned to the cool of her house. There, she handed me a large straw hat and a can of bug spray, and we went out to pick blueberries from her bushes. She wanted me to take some to Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, at the next stop on my trip, and have some for my drive. We ended up with several little crates of berries, and I put them in the cooler I carried in the car.

I was struck by how firmly Nell Ann inhabited this place. Some people just reside where they are; they are not invested or enamored, and if given the choice to leave, it might be easy for them to do so. Nell Ann and her siblings, though, grew up on this large parcel of land, in this very rural area. Nell Ann did leave for her graduate work. For many small-towners, college can become the launching point to somewhere that is anywhere but *back there*. I was one of those very college students. But Nell Ann returned, putting an impression on Hinds Community College as solid as the bricks in the donor sidewalk that bear the name of her, her husband, and her sisters. In the world of the somewhat portable academic, Nell Ann kept her "map pin" firmly in the Raymond area, and it is a richer place because of that.

When she walked me to my car to see me off, Nell Ann noticed some damage my car had sustained on the night of my first stop of the trip, when a large moving truck (fortunately driven by someone with insurance) backed into my front bumper in the late-night darkness. It hadn't caused enough damage for me to not continue, resulting only in a scraped and dented bumper and a broken face plate of the indicator light. But Nell Ann

declared it needed to be at least patched up, so she got in her car and led me back into Raymond to an auto parts store. We asked a clerk, who couldn't help much, and so I purchased gold transparent tape; between the tape and a small screwdriver I had with me, the two of us fashioned a new cover over the light to at least keep out the rain and hold me over until I could get a proper repair. I actually drove with this make-shift patch for almost a year. It seemed a repeat of Nell Ann and Ann's book: with some determination and common sense, two resourceful women can create something unexpectedly lasting.

“And I know that I will find neither offerings nor promises. All that matters is listening to the murmur of the road, following the route, ignoring other tracks, traveling as if only one possible path existed: the present.”

Marjorie Agosín, *Cartographies: Meditations on Travel*

CHAPTER 7

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

When I set out on this trip, I had hoped to learn how these five people had made homes in the disciplinary field(s) they love. How did their personal and professional lives intertwine to bring them to the place they inhabited as teachers, scholars, administrators, and leaders? What personal and professional decisions did they make along the way toward their current successes? Could these kinds of decisions provide lessons for a compositionist like me to reach a desired stage in her own professional journey?

As I will explore here, regardless of the position for which the five participants in this study were aiming, looking back at the steps they each took in their professional journeys is enlightening. Some decisions were certainly very purposeful; other factors that influenced their professional outcomes included early influences, unplanned interruptions of chance or happenstance, and most important, how the participants responded to such interruptions. While such steps are often evident in any academic career, the nature of the field of composition allows for a much larger range of decisions and responses, which I will discuss shortly.

Influence as Decision

As several of the narratives in *This Fine Place So Far From Home: Voices from the Academic Working Class* attest, some early “decisions” about career paths are actually influenced by the expectations of family and early educational experiences through to the undergraduate years. Dews and Law, the editors of *This Fine Place*, wanted to create this collection to show what I found to also be true of my study participants: “. . . where we come from (the South, the working class) matters absolutely with how we interact with the academy now, with our colleagues, with our students, with the faceless mechanism that is the institution” (2). Upbringing and expectations are crucial influences on many. For example, for each of the participants in this study, going to college was a given in their families. Don McQuade’s family was full of teachers, one of the options he said was accorded a high level of status, “after the priest.” With the intention of becoming a teacher, too, McQuade attended St. Francis College on an academic and athletic scholarship, but he chose the school without applying anywhere else; it was just where he assumed he would go, and teaching is what he assumed he would do.

Anne Ruggles Gere recalled saving money for college before she “knew what college was.” Gere, though, started her undergraduate work in biology. It wasn’t until after she was one of the women of her generation “frozen out of the sciences” that she became an English major. Her mother’s work as an elementary school teacher and as an early clubwoman helped influence Gere’s decisions, and certainly the club work attributed to her later academic interest in extracurricular literacy.

Lillian Bridwell-Bowles' mother supported her in the refusal to take home economics, and this, combined with Bridwell-Bowles later earning the Betty Crocker award for that course she never took, helped her to learn that it was okay to push against the system. In her early years teaching high school, Bridwell-Bowles leaned on this as she pushed against the racism and classism of the poor area where she taught.

Jackie Royster's mother was also an influence throughout Royster's early education. This started early, after Royster's grandmother died and she began, at age three, to go to school when her mother was teaching, which gave her a head start with learning as well as early graduation dates. Royster also followed in her mother's footsteps as a public school teacher for the beginning of her professional career.

An early influence for Nell Ann Pickett was her parents' insistence that she would learn about more than "women's work." With this belief that she could follow any career that she wanted, she dreamed of being a lawyer or a teacher; however, after hearing from an influential state legislator at an early age that "women shouldn't be lawyers," she began to lean more toward teaching. At such a young age, this was less a decision she made than a mindset that was imposed on her. All five of these interviewees, in fact, started paths that were based less on their own decisions and more on the influence of others, some positive, some not.

Decisions and Unplanned Interruptions

At a certain point, though, each person became more intentional in his or her decisions, but that didn't mean that their paths were necessarily set or that happenstance didn't play a part. All five participants did go on to teach, although only McQuade's first position was at the postsecondary level, a fact which could be a function of both gender

expectations or approved aspirations of a generation. He continued teaching at this level while he completed his doctorate and taught quite happily at Queens College. But based on his national involvement with issues in English Studies, he was contacted by UC-Berkeley with an extraordinary opportunity, which is when his response (as I will discuss in the next section) became of particular interest.

With Master's degrees (except for Pickett), the remaining four participants taught first at pre-college levels: Royster taught elementary school, and Gere, Bridwell-Bowles, and Pickett taught in secondary schools. Eventually, their career changes were fueled by intentional decisions and others by outside circumstances. Royster made the very definite decision to discontinue teaching at the elementary level because she felt that "only the best teachers should be elementary school teachers," and for Royster, her mother was one of those excellent teachers, but Royster wasn't. She made the decision to start in a journalism program. In the summer before, however, she had the chance to teach courses in composition, and that experience helped her to decide against the original journalism choice and instead seek more study in English Language and linguistics, here specifically choosing a less-typical D.A. instead of Ph.D. because of the broader range of choices that a Doctorate of Arts at the University of Michigan offered. Royster's careful, considered manner is clear in the decisions she made about the best way to study what most interested her.

Although Gere enjoyed teaching at high school, when she moved with her husband to Ann Arbor, where he had been assigned to a new church community, she had difficulty finding another position in secondary teaching. Through a friend back at Princeton High School, she met with the chair of the English Department at the

University of Michigan, who offered her either “a receptionist job or teaching two sections of poetry.” As she said of the “big choice”: “of course I took the teaching.” From that point, she characterized her next step in graduate work as something of an “accident,” when she “discovered that they had this Ph.D. program in English Education.” She was able to study all the ideas she found fascinating. She emphasized the apparent happenstance of the situation, saying, “The rest is history. It really could have been a very different narrative.” This is the beginning for Gere of several important responses to the unexpected.

Bridwell-Bowles very clearly chose when to leave her high school teaching position. Following a year at home with her son, she returned to teaching but found that the job she once loved didn’t resonate with her as strongly. Some of the problems were clear and significant, such as the suicide of one of her students. The school felt “oppressive” to her as well, and after one of the secretaries told her that her request for paper clips could be met with only a small number rather than a full box, Bridwell-Bowles said it was suddenly obvious that she couldn’t do the work she wanted to in that situation “as an insider teacher.” The understanding was “just crystal clear” to her, and so she went back to graduate school. While the decision is very defined and seems to have been made in a moment, it was also a realization about a long-building crisis.

Pickett’s move from secondary to tertiary teaching was less pronounced; encouraged by others, she continued her education and began teaching back at Hinds Community College. She completed her Ph.D. from there. Pickett certainly didn’t proceed without agency in her decision making, but she was still strongly influenced by her close family and ties to her home county.

Overall, the five composition teacher-scholar-leaders I interviewed built upon their early influences and opportunities by making, eventually, their own decisions about their career goals. Quite early for most of them, though, and increasingly so with the passage of time, unplanned offers and events required that they make changes in their plans. Their responses to these changes are what show them to be the leaders that they are.

Responses to Unplanned Interruptions

Surprises in life are not unusual, but the ways in which people respond to them is a crucial determiner of their ensuing satisfaction with their lives. In this group of people, those responses are part of what has fueled both their continued professional accomplishments and personal satisfaction.

McQuade Meets Berkeley

Ensnared in a career within which he was very comfortable, Don McQuade came to a very unexpected crossroads. He was a successful teacher and administrator at Queens College, and he and his family were happy with their home, schools, jobs, and lives in New York City. When Berkeley contacted him about filling a position that would help them “take composition seriously,” he first gave them several names of his national colleagues. All of these people, though, returned the recommendation back toward McQuade, particularly because Berkeley wanted to combine composition and literature in a meaningful way, and as McQuade himself said, he is “someone who still carries two passports” for the two fields. The move would be more than a coast-to-coast change, but one of shifting to a different tier of institution as well as changing the plans of his family.

But McQuade recognized the offer as something significant—so significant that he characterized it as “like a call to the Vatican.” He took the leap.

His work at Berkeley eventually brought him to another decision, about accepting the Vice Chancellor position, which included work with fundraising. The focus on philanthropy was at first uncomfortable for him; as he said, “Both of my parents were immigrants,” and so without a wealthy background, the high level of funding he would bring seemed foreign. Again, though, he recognized the possibilities and took the position. He also chose to remain very active in his areas of disciplinary interest, supporting organizations like CCCC, the Modern Language Association, and the National Writing Project on significant, national levels. Although both Berkeley offers were not planned, the decisions McQuade made in response to them allowed him to grow as a professional as well as continue to support his academic interests.

Gere Makes It Work

Woven throughout Anne Ruggles Gere’s professional story is her devotion to her family. As discussed earlier, she called the beginning of her doctoral work something that happened by “accident,” something that came out of the move to her husband’s next position as a pastor. Similarly, when he was called to serve in St. Louis while she was well established at the University of Michigan, she moved again. This, time, though, she also responded by finding ways to make both commitments work—not just function, but truly operate well, even though it required traveling twice a week between states.

After she had found some equilibrium in this schedule, she started the unplanned raising of her granddaughter. Again, Gere found to make all aspects of her life work, even though she had to make sacrifices in the amount of direct face-time with students,

for example. When she could, she used her “old girls’ network” to secure a semester of teaching in St. Louis; she also used her significant administrative experience to allow her to take a position that required less “face time,” even with the trade of more responsibility in many ways. With careful planning, Gere’s response to this interruption shows not just her commitment to her job and her family, but also her strength and intelligence as a professional and an individual.

Bridwell-Bowles Meets Life

Lillian Bridwell-Bowles jokingly refers to herself as a “drama queen,” but she is not the usual definition of a woman who creates her own drama. She hasn’t needed to. Perhaps she simply may be more upfront about her challenges than many people are, but her challenges have indeed been significant. When her first husband came out to her as gay, moved to San Francisco, and eventually contracted HIV, Bridwell-Bowles remained supportive. When he died of AIDS during the time when she was on the CCCC’s executive committee, she placed a photo of the AIDS quilt on the front of that year’s convention program, with a photo of a CCCC’s square to be added into the quilt. During this long period of upheaval, both of her parents also died. Later, she was diagnosed with and was treated for breast cancer. She responded by bringing Susan Love, a researcher of breast cancer and a women’s health advocate, to speak at the University of Minnesota. In doing so, Bridwell-Bowles wasn’t serving only the agenda of breast cancer survivors; she also integrated that experience with Love’s skills as a rhetorician, thus helping attendees of the presentation and Love herself to understand this intellectual and personal connection Bridwell-Bowles had made. At each turn, she came back fighting—and in

front of one large crowd, she came back by pulling the wig off her treatment-baldened head and boldly waving the wig in the air.

At first I was surprised to hear that Bridwell-Bowles had made the move from Minnesota to Louisiana State in order to take on the exciting new *CxC* project LSU was establishing; however, learning about the very bold aspects of her made the decision more understandable. Consistently, she had faced very difficult challenges and tried to grow from them. When she was presented with a new challenge from which she knew she could grow, no matter at what point in her career, Bridwell-Bowles embraced it.

Royster Finds Balance

Of these five participants, Jackie Royster was the most pointed in offering professional advice, including advising me about how crucial it is to understand how I might balance the requirements of a new job, but also to know that “over the trajectory of your career, that balance shifts and changes.” Royster exemplifies this balance. When she taught at Spelman, she was asked to be an administrator in many forms, and she met this challenge, believing that people in composition know how to “do stuff” and are often the “worker bees.” During this time, she did very little publishing. When her husband was offered a job at Ohio State, Royster came as the “trailing spouse” (although many assumed it was the other way around). Because she understood the different missions of a school like Spelman and a Research 1 institution like Ohio State, she did not bristle at again teaching freshman composition and directing a writing center; she relished the opportunity to do this work she enjoyed.

On the other side of understanding the Research 1 priority, at Ohio State, Royster began a prolific publishing agenda. She became more active on a national level with

organizations like CCCCs, and she again accepted administrative appointments. Looking back at some of her work, she does admit that some of it was too much, and she recognizes now that as much as she loves teaching, she knows she can't do it all and do it well. Again, she advised me that, as a compositionist with the "worker bee" tendency, "you have to learn . . . to say no." As the "trailing spouse," Royster found a way to blaze her own balanced trail.

Pickett Builds on Experience

Nell Ann Pickett returned to teach at Hinds Community College, a school from which she herself graduated. When her chair considered her a natural choice to teach technical writing, she faced the challenge of creating a course for her students that she felt truly suited their needs. Because she couldn't find a suitable textbook for those needs, she forged one out of those experiences that had made her seem "a natural choice." With ingenuity and a lot of legwork, she and her collaborator, Ann Laster, formed a packet of materials, but then faced the next challenge of publishing it in a way that felt right both for the students and for them. Fighting the prejudices against gender, region, institution size, and even writing style, Pickett and Laster eventually launched a textbook that remains a crucial contribution to the field of technical writing.

Pickett has consistently applied this same force in her commitment to the field of composition and the mission of community colleges. She emphasized that going to national meetings and staying active is crucial for all professionals: "That is an investment into the profession, an investment into yourself." Pickett's response to being in a perceived "less privileged" position at a community college is to show that there is nothing "less" about her work.

Finding a Home

A clear formula for wise professional development could never be extracted from a sample of five. An easy answer with this particular group would be to laud these five people as being extraordinary, and having abilities beyond what someone new in composition might have; conveniently, then, these could be considered as examples that are not relevant to the more ordinary compositionist. Perhaps that is true. But being extraordinary is not what has led them to be “successful.” Rather, redefining their own definition of “success” through how they responded to the challenges and opportunities in their lives is what has helped them make their lives extraordinary. I recognize that I must take great care here to not let this slip into the murky waters of platitudes. That sentence could seem tossed off, dismissed with an easy “so what?”

This point is crucial, though. Finding a sense of “home” exactly where we are can be a significant challenge, especially if that home is in a place or position we didn’t expect. As these five people learned, this kind of home can be represented with a map pin that likely will move for various reasons, planned and unplanned.

The Larger Map of Composition

Through studying the careers of these five teacher-scholars, I see that mapping out the personal and professional journeys one takes is complex, as of course it is with other disciplines. In this research, I wondered if I might discover a map for this field that included some common routes and desired stopping points to lead me toward my own accomplishments in composition. After all, most of us have heard of the mythical map toward success in the academy: finish our doctorates early, work at perhaps one or two institutions, advance to tenure, publish and teach. In many fields, the most coveted

stopping place involves inhabiting a discipline that is much like one large city, perhaps an academic Manhattan (or Seattle, Chicago, or Atlanta), filled with the pocketed neighborhoods of different sub-specialties.

But composition is more than that large city which most other disciplines inhabit. Because of how composition has grown, the resultant field is remarkably capacious—perhaps a country rather than a city. This is not to lessen the importance of other disciplines; it is to understand that because composition established itself partly through connections to so many other theories and fields, composition is, if not larger, at least “roomier.” For example, within these five explorations of scholarship and interviews, I found composition overlapping with a wide variety of other disciplines and interests, thus opening up a vast possibility of routes. Don McQuade connects himself to literature, the literary or personal essay, advertising, religious rhetoric, and visual rhetoric. Anne Ruggles Gere crosses her interest in composition with literacy studies, extracurriculum issues, English studies, visual rhetoric, medicine (specifically, studies in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effect), and American Indian diaspora studies. Lillian Bridwell-Bowles has explored interests in feminism, racial and ethnic diaspora studies, computer-assisted instruction, queer theory, *Writing Across the Curriculum*, and *Writing in the Disciplines*. Jacqueline Jones Royster is the clearest example of the “rhetoric and composition” view of the field, with rhetoric first, which she uses to focus intently on African American diaspora studies and history. Finally, Nell Ann Pickett’s enduring tie to technical writing also required her to explore agriculture, engineering, business, technology, computers, visual rhetoric, and any other field in which the wide variety of her community college students might be interested. With just these five individuals, then, composition crosses

paths with 22 different fields, and that is before adding in all the fields with which technical writing must interact. With a field so open, we have room to find multiple routes and disciplines to inform our own journeys. Therefore, finding a “home” in composition is seldom as circumscribed as the academic myths would have us believe. The ability to define success on their own terms is at the base of each of these five compositionists’ sense of doing well. A large portion of that is not necessarily about locating the best place for them. “Home” is one they have found in places that they had not always expected.

For a young compositionist like me, hoping to find a direct route to a place where I *think* I want to land, this lesson is critical. I do not have to hop on the academic jet to get to the one city with the one neighborhood that is home to my interests. When I began this study, I still believed that I needed to find such a travel plan. A part of me wanted to interview this group of people because I thought I wanted to be (or was supposed to be) trying to be one of them. In this more open world of composition, though, I have found different paths to travel. Remembering my early feelings of disconnection from the field and from my colleagues, I have chosen to teach now in a stand-alone writing program with 21 colleagues who are all passionately devoted to the work of composition. Such stand-alone units are in some ways the answer-of-the-moment for labor problems in composition, such as my own former life as a traveling adjunct. Whether my program truly solves that problem is not to be answered here (or even soon). However, I see now that I have many, many options, and that rather than relying on an institution or a position to hand me my own sense of belonging, I choose how to make my own home, wherever I am, just as my participants have. The pervasive discontent I sometimes see on listservs or

at conferences can be remedied by what these five leaders taught me: choice. Not one of the people I interviewed for this project claimed to have known exactly when and where his or her own journey started. They didn't point out the exact route or destination they had planned. They did not clearly envision a particular stopping place, and yet they each fully inhabit the spaces they have found.

That is the final key: intentionality. I am sure that were we to have purposefully followed a line of questioning in our interviews regarding the top five gripes they have about their jobs, we might have eventually found answers. These leaders are not simply Pollyannas. They choose, however, to find not only what is good within their position, not only how to adapt to it, but most important, how to adapt the position to them.

I cannot say that I have reached an ending point in my professional journey, but I do know that my current stopping place is a good place to be. I still teach mostly freshman composition, and I continue to love it. At least once per term, I feel that sense of falling in love. Through this study, I didn't find a handy reference map that I could place in the appendix, something new scholars could tear out as a guide or more seasoned travelers could use to decide how to plan a new move. I don't even have an easy heuristic to follow to concoct the equivalent of Successful Compositionist Snake Oil. As cliché as the idea has become, it seems that the real power is in understanding the journey rather than focusing on an absolute destination.

Composition is a big country. We can't always trust the maps to lead us to where we really need to be going. Sometimes, we must concentrate on the murmur of the road, and we must find the wisdom in ourselves to know when it is time to pull over for awhile, whether for a few years or for a career, and truly explore what can be good about such a

place. “Success” is something that is made, even by the ordinary among us, and then that is a secret that is passed down, as it was to me: go, see, and then find your stop and tell your stories.

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