

Introduction

The History of Composition Is the History of Its People

I HAVE ALWAYS been interested in local history, but until the last few years I did not envision myself becoming a scholar of the local histories of writing. In my earlier scholarship, I had focused on the present and future of writing and rhetoric, concerned with breaking new ground rather than retooling the past. In graduate school, I decided against a concentration in literary studies precisely because I believed that this field of study would require me to tread over texts and documents already explored by numerous scholars in as many settings. I did not see, in my own work, the value of the old; I saw writing studies—broadly construed—as a place where the new is always taking place, where the emergent creation, not cold resuscitation, of the text was the focal point of study. I did not see the value of the documented narratives of my—or your, or even *our*—educational past.

My lack of interest in archival work was in stark contrast to my interest in the symbols of the past that had perpetually surrounded me. My doctoral work took place in Chicago, where history is a forceful presence

that tells its tales in the architecture of the city. On my long daily bus rides to campus, I was transfixed by the turn-of-the-century skyscrapers on La-Salle and Michigan Avenues against the brutalist work of Cabrini-Green. On campus at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), I was equally fascinated by the functionalist school buildings of concrete-in, concrete-out, riot-proof design. It was said that the UIC campus was built to “identify” with the Eisenhower Expressway to its immediate north. This identification was made possible largely by the razing of Maxwell Street and much of the Jane Addams Hull House mission. It was one of a series of pockets of contrast throughout Chicago: socioeconomic statements about historical erasures and new beginnings, creating human and community sacrifices, including those of history-changing women such as Addams. In history, there is always this measure of tangible regret, as there are always voices that long to be heard more forcefully, if ever heard at all.

As I graduated and left the city to begin my academic career, I did not forget my burgeoning interest in the physically represented past that was strengthened during my time as a student. Yet, for myself, I still did not see any clear connection between history and writing studies scholarship. I moved East to teach first-year composition and direct the first-year writing program of a regional university in Connecticut. This university had its origins as a late-nineteenth-century normal school: it was the Southern Connecticut State Teachers College for over seventy years. It then became, in 1959, the Southern Connecticut State College—newly coeducational and comprehensive in nature. Finally, in the 1990s, just a few years before my arrival on campus, it became Southern Connecticut State University. Older community members still referred to it as “the girls’ school” or “SCSC,” forgetting—or not recognizing—its new position as a regional university and its aim to move beyond undergraduate, single-sex education, even though this population had been our roots. The student body still was nearly two-thirds female, and the best programs were still in education and nursing—those fields that have historically attracted women students. But still it doggedly built shiny new buildings and put up bright new signs, advertising the future and eschewing the less-selective, less-inclusive past. Faculty spoke little, if at all, about the women who had founded the school. The university kept a limited archive; it had little physical, public evidence of our transformation from normal school to coeducational university, particularly within the academic departments’ records. It was a blank slate upon which history was rewritten, in keeping with the shifting educational economy, every twenty or so years.

So when, after seven years in Connecticut, I began my first archival

project on basic writing—falling quite by accident on the rich history of this subfield of writing studies as it had been hidden in, of all places, Yale University, some five miles from my campus—I came to a swift and unexpected consciousness regarding the ways in which composition and rhetoric, like cities and educational institutions, are heavily indebted to the stories and legacies of their past. As I discussed in my first book on archival histories, *Before Shaughnessy*, I saw through the Yale archives the insubstantiation of the histories of writing, particularly basic writers, who had had no real voice in the scholarship I had read, save their revoicing by well-meaning (and often vitally important) teachers and scholars. I began to understand—first through Yale’s archives, and then through those at Harvard—that the history of the local was what ultimately moved composition studies as a field; that I had not thought deeply enough, in the first few years of my professional life, about how much composition in the present time is influenced by the students and teachers, and other stakeholders, of its past. I similarly began to understand that those histories that were the least told—such as those of basic writers, particularly those at prestigious universities, where they were doubly marginalized from within and without—were those histories that the archives could most effectively tell. Yet at the time, I did not anticipate finding still more voices to uncover.

In 2008, I moved to the University of North Carolina–Greensboro to direct its first-year composition program, leaving behind, but not forgetting, the vexing path of writing histories in Connecticut. In North Carolina, I would again be met by the vestiges of the past, and these fragments of history would also be part of the legacy of women’s education to which I had seen so little homage at SCSU. Even though I was now teaching at a research-intensive university with a variety of doctoral programs, including one in the English department, the roots of my campus were still heavily steeped in its past as first a normal school, and then a general women’s college. I was surrounded by a reverence for the past on campus and in my community. As a newcomer to the South and its histories, I inhaled all available stories about my institution.

Unlike the erasure of history and women’s voices that I found at SCSU, I learned that our surviving alumnae from the Woman’s College era of the University of North Carolina–Greensboro—1931–63—have been, in fact, our most vocal and valuable community members, and their histories fill the buildings and other gathering spaces of our campus. Hardly a day goes by that I am not reminded that once we were not just a teachers college, but one of the premier public colleges for women in the South. Our

alumnae keep this memory alive in many ways; the class of 1952 endows a generous departmental research fund for senior faculty in English, and all surviving classes of this era—the WC graduates, as they are known—hold annual reunions that bring classmates together from far and wide. Our Woman’s College alumnae are the most vital of all graduates in the history of the institution. Those who followed, the UNCG-era alumni, are certainly valuable and valued, but they have nowhere near the institutional investment that the WC alumnae do. We may be coeducational at this point in our history, but our campus is built solidly on the socioinstitutional stories of women—as students, teachers, and, important to this particular book, as writers. A full-sized statue of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, stands outside our university library as a keen reminder of our (positively) gendered past.

In undertaking this book, which serves as a sequel to my focus on the local in *Before Shaughnessy*, I thus employ the rich history of women’s education at my own institution as a vehicle and case study for my assertion that studying the pasts of individual programs can assist us in seeing important moments in our field’s history; in this book, the moment under review is the political, curricular, and socioinstitutional intersection of composition and creative writing in mid-twentieth-century America, at one public postsecondary institution. I shift my spotlight on local history from the Ivy League to a far lesser-known college population: the postwar women’s public college.

To explore this local institutional history is a mandate that goes beyond a personal desire to better understand my own position in my program, or the legacy of writing at my university. Without history, to borrow from Santayana, there is no check on the practices of the present; without acknowledging and sometimes rectifying our pasts, we cannot confidently advance into our futures, feeling certain about the truth of the *then* versus the *next*. Nowhere is this more true than in large institutional structures such as first-year writing programs. We continually and generationally define literacy in context, and in doing so define and redefine the critical first-year writing course, mindful of its “universal” requirement status that attempts to educate students in the acts of writing, reading, interpretation, criticism, and analysis with one wide swath of pedagogical practice, despite its complex institutional and cultural past.

In order to better understand the overriding ways in which institutions work and subsequently leave records of their workings for future generations—an important point of consideration for any archivist or archival scholar—and to lay a theoretical groundwork for my study, I have

found significant value in the scholarship of Charlotte Linde.¹ In *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory*, Linde, a sociolinguist, argues that narrative is “the link between the way an institution represents its past, and the way its members use, alter, or contest that past, in order to understand the institution as a whole as well as their own place within or apart from that institution” (4). Linde believes that while institutions may “remember,” the relevant question to ask when dissecting an institutional history, or memory, is, “is it the institutions that remember, or is it the people within them who do the remembering?” (8). Because Linde contends that “any historical account must be understood as being the history of someone, for someone, for some purpose,” she resists the notion that either institutional documents, or official archives, or personal narratives/interviews can in isolation accurately provide us with a full institutional memory for future use (9). Instead, Linde believes that “remembering does not happen until these [aggregate] materials are used in ongoing interaction” (12), as checks against one another and as documents designed to make meaning actively rather than simply transcribe passively their past meanings, historically speaking.

Linde’s definition of narrative—the core methodology upon which many institutional archives, and our readings of them, are built—comes from a wide variety of resources, including personal histories but also textual documents that tell the story of how the institution itself has narrated and preserved its historical legacy, through “meetings, speeches, conventions” as well as personal and shared artifacts (45, 67). Even class reunions, Linde argues, can serve as institutional narratives that “create the institution by remembering it” (53). This is due to Linde’s twofold definition of *institution*, which can be “both formal and informal groupings of people and established recognizable practices” (7). In Linde’s terms, the Woman’s College would of course be deemed an institution, but so would its English department, as well as smaller groups within that department, such as the first-year writers who created and published the department’s first-year composition magazine in the early 1950s, or the creative writing and literature faculty who sat on the English department composition committee and contributed to its curricular reform between 1954 and 1956. Keeping this fluid definition of institution in mind, Linde argues that the purpose of her study is to acknowledge that “institutions and people within institutions do not mechanically record and reproduce the past. Rather, they work the past, re-presenting it each time in new but related ways for a particular purpose, in a particular form that uses the past to create a particular desired present and future. These forms of representation of the

past are not identical, but their differences themselves are important to study. There are important patterns in the way stories are reproduced and the ways they are changed” (14).

To apply Linde’s core contention to composition studies is to re-envision its history as one of its people, those who “work” the past through competing narratives, some of which are heard and some silenced. Linde’s claim that these representations create a “particular desired present and future” fits well with the politically charged history of composition and rhetoric, particularly the fraught first-year requirement that desires, in its field history, to be a course of continual progress and imminent theoretical realization—that is, a course that covers its tracks and learns from its historical mistakes in order to improve upon the progress of its inhabitants (student writers). Composition also desires to be a course that can be “universally” dropped into any institutional location with some expected degree of conformity—that is, a “one size fits all” model, regardless of that institution’s history or local needs. As I argued in *Before Shaughnessy*, this blanket application of one course type or model to any and all settings is a troubling practice, and a historically fractured one at that.

Linde’s theory of institutional narratives, however, reminds us that any universal, functional application of an institution—in this case, first-year composition—ignores the historical realities of its own meaning-making and competing narrative emphases. To translate to our current view of archival work in composition studies, Linde would likely argue that by focusing for many years on how prestigious private and large public institutions “do” composition, and by declaring that the histories of all-male (usually white male) colleges and universities represent the course into the future, across all other institutional types, we are turning a deaf ear to the voices struggling to make alternate meanings from that history. We are, in effect, ignoring the fact that the most important event in the life of the story of an institution is when it breaks from its origin stories and “moves to a new generation of tellers,” since “if a story does not acquire new tellers, it can have no life beyond the life of the original person who experienced the events and first formulated them as a story” (Linde 73–74).

In his seminal archival work on the history of composition and rhetoric, Robert Connors states, “In a sense, the history of composition-rhetoric in America is a history of how this heretofore ‘elementary’ instruction took over a commanding place in most teachers’ ideas of rhetoric” (*Composition-Rhetoric* 127–28). Following Connors’s work, the narrative of composition studies’ history has almost always centered on its movement from a perceived solution to student illiteracies at Harvard, to

a widespread required course devoid of intellectual value and dreaded by faculty, but favored by institutions seeking “practical” training for growing first-year classes, to an uncomfortable ugly-cousin course of major (including graduate) study in the English department, despite its regular calls for independence from this (as it is argued) master-slave disciplinary relationship.

Connors’s equation brought to the surface the importance of recovering the major trajectories of writing instruction, in the context of our cultural history, and spotlighting the waves of theory that have permeated our writing classrooms. But we continue to characterize composition studies at the institutional level—as a machinery rather than a field populated by specific individuals over time—largely due to Connors’s spotlight on said machinery. Also in *Composition-Rhetoric*, Connors purports to cover “older and newer forms of composition-rhetoric, of school and university rhetorics, of women’s rhetorics and men’s. To do otherwise would be to reduce the formidable complexity of the situation” (7). Yet even as Connors devotes his first chapter to “Gender Influences,” this discussion only attends to elite women’s colleges and the admission of women to co-educational institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though Connors contends that 70 percent of all universities admitted women by 1900, he makes no mention of the vast number of normal schools or teachers colleges also educating primarily or only women during this pre-World War I era, noting instead the power of the feminization of the discipline due to the influence of women rhetors within these elite and coeducational institutional structures. Additionally—because to do so is not his particular historical project—Connors makes little mention of the position of creative writing as first-year composition’s rival suitor for the funds, people-power, and social intellectual energies of the English department at large, particularly postwar. We find a similar lack of attention to women’s education in other major field histories, such as James Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality*.

I believe there can be a more intricate and nuanced definition and exploration of women’s composing within composition studies’ history than Connors tries to provide, one that is dependent upon local conditions and key individuals and one that highlights rather than glosses this history across institutional types. In the case of many colleges and universities, these local conditions revolve around conflicting student and faculty definitions of *literacy*, the value of the creative versus the expository in first-year writing, and the individuals who have been the decision makers versus the ones upon whom decisions were foisted. I argue we now should

dislodge our historical analysis of writing instruction from a critique of the institution of composition studies and its politicized machinery and relocate it instead in a larger contextual analysis of the predilections and communal values of its people, famous, infamous, and unknown, or heretofore unnamed. This latter group encompasses the student writers as well as the faculty/teachers who inhabit the institution, those whose stories have not been told, who have not been “the tellers,” in Linde’s terms, including, in some cases, those who worked in and were influenced by the confluence of creative writing and composition studies in the mid-twentieth century.

Linde also notes that “the highest ranked member of the institution” usually tells the story of that institution (203); in the case of composition studies, this member is often the external teacher/scholar who narrates the history of a program or programs, or prevalent pedagogy across programs, from the point of view of an outsider. But that teller is speaking from an external position, first, and is therefore unable to fully represent the local; this was my position in researching Yale and Harvard. Second, that teller is often re-presenting the story of the most dominant voices, whereas there are also “noisy silences” to be represented, or “silences in one situation about matters spoken loudly or in whispers in other situations” (Linde 197). These are what we commonly refer to, in our culture, as counternarratives; in composition studies, these include the voices of women students and faculty whose stories have not been fully represented in the history of first-year writing, and who were sometimes also the voices of teachers and students of creative writing within or beside composition curricula. Even though there has been measurable attention paid to the feminization of composition via the significant number of underpaid, overworked composition *teachers* (see Holbrook; S. Miller; and Schell), far less attention has been paid to women as viable, agentic *students*, or as student-writers, in any subgenre of English studies. Their “noisy silences” are what I aim to represent in this book through a case study of postwar writing instruction at the Woman’s College.

Such a singular case study of women’s writing as this book attempts is sorely needed, because despite the significant number of archival studies in rhetoric and composition over the past twenty-five years, taking many shapes and spotlighting myriad scholarly agendas, little has been documented that works toward a historical counternarrative of any kind of the institution that is composition studies, and few studies have as their author an individual with a personal role, past or present, in the institution being studied. Archival works have catalogued and interpreted key historical documents in the genesis and growth of the field (John Brereton’s

The Origins of Composition Studies; Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen Carr, and Lucille Schultz's *Archives of Instruction*), and have reviewed and classified key pedagogical movements in the field (James Berlin's aforementioned *Rhetoric and Reality* and his *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth Century American Colleges*). Archival work has also critically analyzed the politics of our field's history (Sharon Crowley's *Composition in the University*; Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals*; Robert Connors's aforementioned *Composition-Rhetoric*), as well as turned a narrow lens on subgroups within composition and rhetoric (Barbara L'Eplattenier and Lisa Mastrangelo's *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration*; Mary Soliday's *The Politics of Remediation*; Patricia McAlexander and Nicole Pepinster Greene's *Basic Writing in America*). In far fewer cases, scholars of the archives have studied specific programs, in isolation or in like groupings (Robin Varnum's *Fencing with Words*; Brent Henze, Jack Selzer, and Wendy Sharer's *1977: A Cultural Moment in Composition*; Thomas Masters's *Practicing Writing*; Patricia Donahue and Gretchen Fleischer Moon's *Local Histories*). In addition to these book-length studies, there have also been numerous archives-based articles and chapters by these authors and many others appearing in our journals' pages over the past several years.²

To index further the scope and professional reach of archival work, one can see its emphasis in the literature of composition studies in broader, more theoretical ways. For example, scholars such as Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser have stressed the importance of archival work in locating and establishing the historical narratives of the administration of composition and rhetoric programs in "The WPA as Researcher and Archivist," and Robert Schwegler has compiled and catalogued a variety of primary documents, including first-year writing textbooks, that also narrate the field through the National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric at the University of Rhode Island. Susan Miller's *The Norton Book of Composition Studies* also privileges historical and archival work, including excerpts of some of the archival studies named above, in its aim to provide a comprehensive, quasi-chronological overview of the field for new scholars, particularly graduate students teaching first-year writing. One could additionally argue that the database Comppile (www.comppile.org), under the leadership of Richard Haswell and Glenn Blalock, is itself an archival repository of the scholarship of the field, particularly in its cataloguing of lesser-studied pieces from the early years of composition and rhetoric journals, aiding new and established scholars alike in navigating the field's history.

Yet even as this plethora of historical perspectives on rhetoric and composition points to a growing interest in developing a collective narrative

about the history of writing instruction at the postsecondary level, scholars such as David Gold have pointed out that this narrative continues to be peppered with gaps, specifically those created and perpetuated by our own ignorance of how marginalized student voices in composition studies have shaped our collective history. As Gold argues in *Rhetoric at the Margins*, we do not know enough about lesser-studied corners of education, such as historically black colleges and universities and women's public colleges, and what we do know (or think we know) is too often driven by "an assumption that innovation begins at elite colleges" (ix). Gold believes that studying institutional types that seem "marginal" to historians of education allows us to "illuminat[e] the development of writing and rhetoric instruction in America as a whole" since "small-scale histories can illuminate, inform, challenge, and inspire larger histories" (7) of writing instruction. Gold's complaint is one that I also frequently hear from new teaching assistants and graduate students who wonder, as they read the large-scale histories of composition and rhetoric of Berlin and Connors, where the stories of our diverse, multifaceted students have been told. Where are the "real" women students and students of color whom they see in their first-year writing classes day after day, semester after semester? If these stories have not been told, these beginning instructors and scholars ask, why not?

Another noticeable oversight in this dominant archival history of composition studies is the absence of study regarding other types of writing as they have intersected with the development of first-year composition. While the infamous Tate-Lindemann debate has served as one public marker of the conflict between literature and composition, and while historical accounts of composition frequently emphasize the acquisition of literary "taste" and textual analysis as the backbone of early composition curricula, far less attention has been paid to the relationship of composition to creative writing.³

But such a relationship is important to explore. Creative writing is another comparatively "young" field within the university English department, and one that has a contested history told by dominant voices, especially those in graduate programs, and those teaching at historically prestigious institutions. Our larger histories of composition studies sometimes mention the intersection of creative writing and composition, and more rarely, the larger histories of creative writing as they nod to composition (see, for example, D. G. Myers's *The Elephants Teach*). But rarely do historians treat this intersection with any depth, certainly never breaking its history out into smaller pieces classified by multiethnic or gendered voices, or postsecondary institutions that have served those populations.

As such, the narratives of writing *per se*—those that detail the overlaps, conflicts, and juxtapositions that creative and expository writing have experienced in postsecondary English departments and writing programs—have been almost completely ignored by the archival scholars of our field.⁴

This book thus advances Gold's call in *Rhetoric at the Margins* for a spotlight on marginalized voice *types* in the history of composition studies by focusing on the inhabitants of a women's public college, but also takes that call one step further by complicating the pedagogical and institutional *content* of this history through a cross-examination of composition and creative writing as intertwined curricular activities and intellectual impulses in the Woman's College postwar. This focused dual analysis of writing at the Woman's College also clearly brings to bear my own cross-training in creative writing and composition, and casts it in an archival light—thus bringing my interests in history and writing full circle, but with good historical reasons. Too infrequently do we problematize the growth of allied fields until they suddenly are at war with each other—as creative writing and composition are in many English departments today. Understanding their shared histories through close examination of one sample institution—in this case the Woman's College/UNCG, an institution that is home to one of the oldest MFA programs in creative writing in the United States, proposed, developed, and refined during the postwar years—we can expand and improve our individual archival understandings of “writing studies” across these related fields, and take that expanded understanding into our own current writing programs for consideration or healthy debate.

Finally, it is important for me to note that the historical study in this book is designed, in large part, to celebrate underrepresented voices in their own right, rather than to use them as a vocal counterstatement to dominant histories of male voices in composition studies' archival histories. There is much to champion in studying women's writing for its own sake—its triumphs and progressive actions and actors—without setting it as the other voice that must speak against, or in opposition to, the male-centered, or more privileged, histories that have been highlighted before it. Similarly, this book does not aim to argue for a deeply hybrid notion of writing studies by virtue of its focus on the shared institutional history of creative writing and composition within this women's college setting.

Instead, I recognize that keeping our current pedagogical practices and ideologies responsible to our past is a continual challenge for those of us who direct first-year writing programs; at the same time, engaging new teachers in the narratives that have shaped who and what composition

studies is at our own institutions seems a logical step in promoting and characterizing the current position and value of local enactments of first-year writing vis-à-vis the local past. Sometimes, these pasts were populated with strong creative writing influences, as in the case of the Woman's College/UNCG; in other cases, there were "creative" utterances that were less audible, but which bore a slow and steady influence on the politics and production of the first-year writing program. These influences, positive or negative, are worthy of our current attention.

As one newly minted teaching assistant recently posited during discussion in my pedagogy seminar last year, "it would be helpful if [the field's histories] focused on some of the more positive aspects of these [first-year] courses in addition to telling us what is so horrible about them." She raises a valid point. In our zeal to sometimes demonize the past and illustrate how far we have come in our theories and practices of writing instruction, we frequently forget that there are, in fact, enlightening and perhaps even progressive narratives of literacy instruction that have been elided in favor of the mass reconstruction of our misguided ways, and that some of these positive narratives may be found within our own institutional histories. To see the history of a community such as composition studies as a history of how its people interact with/in their institutional structures, we can begin to privilege the success stories—however small—and the less-studied voices of those success stories, as a critical part of our collective field history. For those who, like myself, serve as writing program administrators, noting this history of the positive alongside the negative is certainly as important as recognizing the history of the marginalized alongside the dominant in our archival work.

About This Book

To Know Her Own History is a sociohistorical study that focuses on the intertwined histories of first-year composition and creative writing at a public Southern women's college in the mid-twentieth century in order to examine how evolving definitions of literacy, as well as evolving views of women as writers, shaped American college writing instruction during the postwar era. I offer new historical insight into the historical happenings in women's writing postwar through an extended case study of the English department of the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, and spotlight the national curricular trends and local institutional conditions that affected this college's students and faculty. These

include the difficult economic conditions inherent to a Southern women's college during this financially precarious postwar period, wherein large, coeducational universities that served a variety of populations effectively grew to dominate the American educational landscape.

To Know Her Own History argues for the value of underrecognized narratives, such as those of women's public college students, that make up our collective history of rhetoric and composition studies. In reclaiming the literacy histories at work in this particular institution during the postwar era, and telling its heretofore untold stories, I mean to use the Woman's College as an archival vehicle with which to explore three central questions that add to existing archival perspectives on composition studies today. First, how was public education for women, particularly women's writing instruction, shaped by two influential movements in higher education—the general education movement and the surge in creative arts instruction—during these two decades of the twentieth century? Second, in what ways did the rise of the status of creative writing at the college level undermine or lessen the visibility and importance of rhetorical and/or expository instruction in first-year writing at the Woman's College, as just one institution among those so critical to postwar educational opportunities for women, the (evolving) teachers' college? And finally, what contested definitions of literacy and schooling arose during this critical era in writing instruction at the Woman's College that might provoke similar archival investigations into the histories of other English departments and writing programs across the country?

This book's investigation begins in 1943, as the postwar period of American education (and culture) begins to take shape, and ends in 1963, the year in which the Woman's College was compelled by state legislators to become a coeducational branch campus of the University of North Carolina. During these twenty years, the attitude toward writing and writing instruction at the Woman's College was atypical and progressive in comparison with its single-sex public college counterparts, and was influenced by a deep appreciation of the literary and the fine arts and a desire to grow its burgeoning program in creative writing. This progressive stance toward creativity in the curriculum emerged in part from the historical mantra of the college's founder, Charles McIver, who proclaimed the importance of women's postsecondary education in his decree that when “you educate the man, you educate an individual; when you educate the woman, you educate a family.” This education, meant to extend to a woman's domestic and professional spheres of influence, emphasized a melding of vocational and intellectual training, which in writing and

English studies meant a creativity of mind and eloquence of expression, in addition to the more pedestrian grammatical correctness and clarity. To be well versed in English studies, in terms of literary history, speech communication, and writing, was one of the most important attributes that a woman should possess upon graduation; such a belief was demonstrated in the two-year program in English that was required of all Woman's College students, unique among peer institutions during this time.

The faculty at the Woman's College, many of whom were women as well as active scholars and writers themselves, shaped and encouraged the development of their students' literacy both inside and outside the classroom, through an extensive curriculum of expository, creative, and journalistic writing courses beyond the first year compulsory course; an annual departmental first-year magazine written, edited, and produced by composition students; and a university-wide literary magazine—also staffed and sponsored by the English department, in conjunction with regular literary festivals and campus readings. *To Know Her Own History* contextualizes these intertwined components of curricular choice and social and cultural training at the Woman's College during this twenty-year period. The book also demonstrates the often problematic interdependence of composition and creative writing that resulted from the department's whole-writer training agenda, as these two areas of study were in direct competition for both material and sociocultural resources in the English department, itself struggling to manage its programs during this era of limited resources. Such a tug-of-war over resources certainly resonates today, and was a reality at that time for the Woman's College as well, despite its status as the premier public institution for women in the South.

This legacy of the public, state-supported women's college, largely lost to the drastic economic turns in higher education occurring during the mid-1960s and to the absorption of normal schools into larger institutions, now deserves to be rediscovered for composition studies scholarship via a detailed, historical discussion of its little-known institutional literacy histories and their significance to Southern education specifically, as well as women's education generally. *To Know Her Own History* aims to fulfill this need, and as such is a continuation of the line of inquiry I began with *Before Shaughnessy*, in which I argued that the construction of writing programs should be local rather than global, and that it should utilize site-specific values and needs rather than slavishly follow a principle of universal curricular design. *To Know Her Own History* narrows the institutional subject of study from two colleges to one, but actually widens my scope of inquiry, as it more fully regards personal, archival narratives as the sub-

stance of our own programmatic futures. Unlike *Before Shaughnessy*, in which I was unable to represent the individual voices of students or faculty as part of my analysis, *To Know Her Own History* draws in part upon oral interviews with three surviving alumnae, as well as other personal documents and photographs of or about these students and faculty, including the composition and creative writing program directors themselves, so as to reinforce perhaps the most important argument underlying a project such as this: that the history of composition studies is, in fact, a history of its people.

Each chapter focuses on one integral part of the story of writing at the Woman's College postwar. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the history of the college, as well as a comparative history of its standing versus other contemporary women's institutions. It then situates the Woman's College in the context of normal schools in the early to mid-twentieth century and in the setting of the American South and its cultural traditions for women's education, using work by scholars of women's rhetoric and women's education. I make the argument in this chapter that the intellectual tradition of the Woman's College was certainly influenced by its teacher-training roots, but that it also heavily resembled the progressive curricular impulses of the elite northeastern schools. I also argue that, given the preponderance of current colleges and universities in the United States that are former teacher colleges or normal schools, the roots of women's education should perhaps be the true core of any archival study of twentieth-century writing outside the Ivy League. Despite its two strong institutional influences, the Woman's College, as an example of this legacy, occupied a separate position in the spectrum of women's education due to its mission to be a premier site for the education of (white) Southern women. This unique and progressive stance allowed for greater attention to women as not just students of writing, but also as future writers.

Chapter 2 examines the early part of the postwar era in the English department of the Woman's College via a study of the first-year writing magazine the *Yearling*. Proposed in 1944 by May Bush, director of first-year writing in the department of English, and put into print in 1948, it was led by a team of undergraduate student editors from the first-year composition sections. The *Yearling* was an annual publication between 1948 and 1951 that profiled creative as well as expository/argumentative pieces of writing produced by first-year students in the English department. The publication was a revival of the annual magazine published by the department's composition program in 1929 and 1930, the *Sample Case*. My analysis of this publication uncovers a blurring of the boundaries of

“creative” and “expository” in the first-year writings spotlighted in this magazine, which complicates the traditional notions of writing pedagogy both in mid-century America in general and in public women’s schools specifically. The alumnae interviews provide an added dimension to the archival analysis of the magazine, as well as the often contradictory position of Woman’s College students as both “proper” ladies and sometimes radical prose writers. As such, the interviews alongside the textual analyses in this chapter collectively argue that the voices and narratives of the women of this college, and other colleges like it, are critical to our deeper understanding of this period of American women’s literacy instruction—a period that is typically characterized as stagnant in its development of students as writers, and about which little has been said regarding *women* student-writers at all.

The third chapter of this book takes a larger administrative view of writing and literacy in its discussion of the year-long revision to the Woman’s College first-year composition course, English 101, completed at the height of general education reform sweeping the nation. To give readers some additional historical context, I discuss the aims of the general education movement as articulated at Harvard University and in other elite and public institutions. I then detail the faculty work done at the Woman’s College during this year of revision at both the university level and at the department level.

The impulses at work in these revisions included, at the university level, determining how general education could be revised to promote a more elite view of the college, and at the department level, settling on the question of whether or how much literature would be included in the curriculum, as well as attending to the curricular and financial resources that would shift to the burgeoning undergraduate track in creative writing. Importantly, at both university and departmental levels, the question of “What is an educated woman?” was at the forefront—a stark contrast to the discussions severely delineating women as separate-but-equal at Harvard, where modern concepts of general education were, arguably, born. Given also that these particular decades of the Woman’s College ushered in both the first basic writing courses and the start of continual curricular proposals for a graduate concentration in creative writing, this chapter spotlights how the Woman’s College curriculum was, in many ways, emblematic of the two ends of the spectrum of writing education emerging in this country, particularly at public colleges postwar. It aims to illustrate in large part what ways *writing* and *literacy* thus proved to be difficult terms for the members of the English department to define during this transi-

tional and volatile period in the institution's history, and in the history of composition studies as it intersected with creative writing nationwide.

Chapter 4 telescopes to a more personal view of writing at the Woman's College, as it juxtaposes two faculty members at the school between 1947 and 1963: the poet Randall Jarrell, who elevated the visibility of the Woman's College both regionally and nationally through his advocacy for undergraduate and graduate creative writing instruction, and literature professor May Bush, who directed the first-year composition program for many years and whose institutional and financial status was continually limited both by her position as composition director and by the concomitant success of Randall Jarrell and the creative writing program. This chapter augments the positive ways that Jarrell and creative writing influenced composition and his unwitting negative influence, specifically the financial support his position and status required, financial support demanded to meet counteroffers from other institutions that was therefore unavailable for raises and promotions for Bush and other women faculty. I also profile Bush's extremely low and private profile through her thirty-four-year tenure at the Woman's College, and thereby spotlight her as an example of an early writing program administrator who embodied many of the longstanding complaints associated with composition-related work in the university today: minimal visibility, low pay, and secondary faculty status as compared to more high-profile faculty in other fields of English studies. Overall, this chapter turns a lens on some salient institutional politics of writing instruction and writing faculty present in the English department midcentury, using the Woman's College as a local case study.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I examine the arguments for and against the demise of the Woman's College as a single-sex institution in 1964, in the context of state politics and the expanding reach of the UNC system, in order to argue that other faculty, in particular fellow writing program administrators (WPAs), should conduct similar archival research and collect oral narratives on the histories of writing instruction and literacy at their own institutions, especially those WPAs who work at smaller public colleges and/or colleges targeted at particular populations whose narratives are fated to be lost to history, just as the Woman's College, as an institution valuing women's literacy, was itself lost. Such widespread work would help scholar WPAs to shape their own institutional futures by gaining a clear understanding of how the past continues to shape us as people (students, teachers, writers) and as inhabitants of writing programs nationwide. It would also call attention to the important histories that have been represented as singular or singularly voiced, as opposed to communally repre-

sented. This movement could ultimately lead to a new understanding of local archival research as not only cataloguing the past, but also troubling and resituating the present for writing programs within all institutional types.