

CHAPTER FIVE

RETHINKING LINKS BETWEEN HISTORIES OF COMPOSITION

As Chapters Two through Four have shown, interactional patterns between historical college student writing and other people and ideas allow us to compare sites as different as a university in the borderland between the Midwest and Appalachia and a university in a major south-central city. The former, OU, witnessed years of westward migration in the nineteenth century, and the latter, UH, founded in the early twentieth century, witnessed an economic and demographic boom thereafter. Beyond already established similarities between how, at these universities, pre-1950s student writing expanded institutional norms, acted kairotically in reference to state or city concerns, and supported epideictic discourse, similarities arise if we dwell more fully on historiography than history. Given the sophistic tradition of framing and reframing knowledge based on language and convention, of finding a reality *through* discourse, as Antiphon illustrated in his *Tetralogies* (Tindale 100), we can consider what we gain if we reconceptualize universities themselves—for many of us, the primary site of our everyday work. More precisely, we can reframe who and what we mean when we refer to *college composition*, *composition instructors*, and *composition students*. The decades before the 1950s lend themselves well to this work because before composition grew into Composition, instructors who taught writing (or rhetoric) readily identified, or were identified, in several ways—as writing teachers as well as members of other professions and emerging disciplines, and as people who worked in classrooms, at community events, and at state or national meetings. At the same time, students wrote pieces for their writing classes but also identified with numerous on- and off-campus groups; even the category *English major* could take more capacious meanings than it holds today.

My goal in this chapter is not to tinker with terms and categories for the sake of tinkering, but, in the spirit of Christopher W. Tindale's reading of *Dissoi Logoi*, to consider other terms (i.e., other conceptions of composition instructors and students) in order to identify the terms' merits (Tindale 104). Recent Rhetoric and Composition research has already begun the important work of unsettling popular notions of writing instructors and students, categories that appear increasingly fluid as times goes on. For example, in "The Politics of Place: Student Travelers and Pedagogical Maps," Julie Drew examines the benefits of framing modern-day composition students as travelers traveling. As she puts it,

Students pass through, and only pause briefly within, classrooms; they dwell within and visit various other locations, locations whose politics and discourse conventions both construct and identify them. By reimagining students as travelers we may construct a politics of place that is more likely to include students in the academic work of composition, and less likely to continue to identify and manage students as discursive novices. (60)

This perspective frames composition students within and, more importantly, outside of classrooms. Thus, Drew discusses the potential of having students compare academically sanctioned discourses to “discourses in which students may feel both more familiar and privileged” (64), discourses common to locations other than the college writing classroom and where students may identify as experts or insiders instead of *students*.

In her conclusion, Drew acknowledges that instructors, too, may be framed as travelers, but she laments “[instructors’] own reluctance to see ourselves as performing our work, in a sense, on the road, in seeing ourselves as occupants of a place where students briefly pause—a roadside stand, perhaps—in their lifelong relationships with multiple discourses” (66). Whether instructors admit it, we, like other literacy sponsors, travel as we interact with people and places beyond students and writing classes. Additionally, as Jonathon Mauk argues, building on Edward Soja’s *Thirdspace*, discourses and tangible, material factors intersect, so our notions of place must include both discourses and people, that is, bodies encountering new conditions that are felt and interpreted and then used to create new discourse-based understandings (Mauk 379). I think of the example of a college composition instructor who interacts with civic organizations that raise money for public libraries and neighborhood literacy groups—physical interactions with other people and in venues where the civic organizations meet. Before, during, and after these interactions, the college instructor may propose writing courses at her university, construct writing assignments, and advise her college students about mentoring and internships that centralize skills in writing and reading. That is, the instructor may create discourses capable of reflecting her newfound, and perhaps unacknowledged, associations. In such a case, material and discursive factors interact with the potential to influence each other.

In general, though, Mauk wants people to locate themselves less in terms of “the indicative (*what is*)” and more in terms of “the subjunctive (*what could be*)” (379), an orientation that could prompt composition students to explore *potential* meanings and uses of places as the students and others move—or travel. The concept of potentiality, which Drew, Mauk, and other Rhetoric and Composi-

tion scholars begin to unpack, informs this chapter's reframing of *composition*, *instructors*, and *students* based on the cases of pre-1950s OU and UH. But before turning to those historical details, we would do well to note a First Sophistic parallel to a contemporary understanding of potentiality, a parallel that clarifies what it can mean to apply the subjunctive (what could be) to composition historiography. Here I refer to *dynaton*, whose Greek root *dyn* is usually translated as *possible*. Near the beginning of *Gorgias*, Plato's Socrates uses *dynaton* when he asks the sophist Gorgias, "So then should we assert that you are *able* to make others rhetors too?" to which Gorgias concurs readily (449b, emphasis added). A more dramatic use of *dynaton* appears in *Theaetetus*, scholar Noburu Notomi informs us, when a "philosopher explains that to escape from earth to heaven . . . is to become as like a god as possible (*homoiōsis theōi kata to dynaton*, 176b1-3)" (Notomi 287). In these cases, *dynaton* focuses attention on the characteristic of ability and gestures to yet-to-be-revealed ideas or actions. Later, in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, *dynaton* appeared in binary opposition to what Aristotle called *energeia*, or actuality (50b6), and this binary has informed subsequent understandings of *dynaton*.

Today, though we lack examples of ancient sophists introducing as opposed to consenting to the word *dynaton* in conversation, we do have examples of early sophists reasoning in ways that imply *dynaton*, as John Poulakos explains ("Toward a Sophistic Definition" 44-45). Most famously, Gorgias, in *The Encomium of Helen*, moves from repeating established facts about Spartan queen Helen's seduction by Prince Paris to speculating about multiple plausible interpretations of Helen's actions: "To tell the knowing what they know shows it is right but brings no delight" (5). A similar move marks Gorgias' defense of the proposal that speech itself, not simply Prince Paris, deserves blame in Helen's seduction. "What cause . . . prevents the conclusion that Helen . . . against her will, might have come under the influence of speech, just as if ravished by the force of the might?" he asks (12). And there begins a broader treatment, involving stimulating analogies, of the potential effects of speech. These moments, which Poulakos has already discussed in terms of the possible, join others of early sophists creating discursive spaces in which to consider novel or unusual factors ("Toward a Sophistic" 44) and thereby reframe the discussion at hand. In a later article, Poulakos observes that whereas the traditional orator in classical antiquity worked from established knowledge and "confine[d] [listeners] within those boundaries," the orator who was guided by *dynaton* acknowledged the impossibility of reaching all ideals yet nonetheless stressed the "'there', the 'then' and the 'can be'" ("The Logic" 21). The latter type of orator focused on moving audiences past constraints imposed by existing conventions, a focus demanding that the orator first understood and then thought imaginatively about those conventions. In

Poulakos' words, "If the orator's display succeeds in firing the imagination of his listeners, and if their hopes triumph over their experiences, the possibilities before them are well on their way to actualization" ("The Logic" 22).

For composition historiography, inspiring audiences to imagine a reachable but not yet flourishing "can be" might begin with the question, through what (if any) interpretive decisions are composition historians "firing the imagination" of readers and giving readers hope about new kinds of histories worth exploring? Patricia Donahue, in the final chapter of *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition*, discusses the difficulty of breaking from Albert R. Kitzhaber's Harvard-based narrative of composition history. Nevertheless, instead of continuing to follow Kitzhaber's methodological choices, she proposes "an expanded analytical framework" that embraces "many possible sites of pedagogical innovation" (Donahue 223). If one still wishes to study the history of composition at Harvard, then one may at least study under-analyzed influences at that site, including influences from administrators and non-composition faculty members (Donahue 229-30). Another of her suggestions is to study the "migration" of early Harvard Professor Adams Sherman Hill's book *Principles of Rhetoric and Their Application* across institutional sites (231), an analytical approach that Drew and Mauk would frame as discourse (Hill's book) traveling across, and interacting with, physical sites (college campuses). Also, Donahue discusses the "opening up of new possibilities" from treating composition as a cultural practice grounded in teaching (235). Coursing through her many suggestions is the allure of untried possibilities in how scholars create composition histories.

Of course, composition historians have begun to consider voices not previously treated as valid contributors to the practice or teaching of writing (Ramsey et al.; Kirsch and Rohan, *Beyond*), and certainly feminist scholars (e.g., Mastrangelo; Bordelon; Enoch, *Refiguring*; Glenn and Enoch) have been at the forefront of this development. But even so, I think that our ways of thinking about historical information at and across institutional sites remain tied to conventional understandings of higher education institutions themselves. Commonly (we might say conventionally), scholars who study composition's past at more than one post-secondary institution focus on one natural or political region: three institutions in central-northern Illinois for Thomas M. Masters, three institutions in east and north Texas for David Gold. Or scholars who take up the study of composition history at multiple sites focus on institutions of the same kind: two Ivy League institutions for Kelly Ritter (*Before*), colleges for working-class students for Susan Kates. While parameters placed around familiar regions or around institutional types can focus a scholar's research and broaden readers' understanding of where and how composition has developed, other ways of focusing are possible.

In the remainder of this chapter, I heed the idea of dynaton by departing

from comparisons preferred by most composition historians and instead opening up a lesser-known narrative path (see Jarratt, *Rereading* 28). My approach, unconstrained by disciplinary lines (Jarratt, *Rereading* 12) and commonsensical institutional similarities, tracks movements across physical and social places of people who administered, taught, or studied composition at pre-1950s OU and UH. The names of the people whom I consider appear across available historical records from or about each of these universities, and their movements covered places within and beyond any one institutional site. In the case of OU, I examine the movements of William Henry Scott, OU president from 1872 to 1883 and a key figure in expanding his university's financial base. I look at changes that Scott and his successors enabled at OU in the decades after his presidency, focusing on the fact that during this time composition grew in multiple directions simultaneously to serve the interests of faculty members from different OU departments and colleges. Then, in the case of UH, which lacks historical records of the same kind kept at OU, I focus on four people whose interactions brought composition into contact with yet other people and ideas. These four people were L. Standlee Mitchell, a professor, director, and actor who brought together rhetoric and drama; Harvey W. Harris, an instructor of speech and English who brought together oral and written rhetoric as well as classroom learning and extracurricular activities; Mary Treadway, a student at Houston Junior College who, as a recipient of a scholarship from a Houston-area women's club, brought together college writing and civic sponsorship; and Professor Ruth Pennybacker, whose teaching, education, and family connections brought together local and national movements. More than extracting composition insights from biographical sketches, a convention in both local and national histories (Kitzhaber 59; Connors 183; Varnum 38, 134; Kates 28; Gold 126; Masters 185), but also within the realm of the "can be" (Poulakos, "The Logic" 21), my focus encourages scholars to notice *glocal* travels of people and ideas, as well as kinds of influences that, regardless of region or institutional type, can structure the writing environments experienced by college students. Such travels would go undetected if I analyzed and compared OU and UH through the more expected factor of their surrounding region or institutional type. Too, as I show in this and the next chapter, recognizing composition's shifting shapes and influences creates new possibilities for historical information about composition to inform present-day practices.

COMPOSITION ON THE MOVE AT OU

At OU, shifting shapes of composition can be studied by first tracking the social and physical spaces entered by an influential university member, William

Henry Scott, whose actions were reported across historical sources. From here, we can consider how Scott's work at and beyond OU connected to interactions that profoundly changed composition at his institution, putting the ownership of composition into the hands of numerous people as new departments, colleges, and course sequences emerged circa 1900. That is, at least two kinds of travels are conspicuous, the travels of Scott, president of OU from 1872 to 1883, and the travels of the *concept of composition* as it was taken up by institutional stakeholders in the decades after Scott's presidency.

WILLIAM HENRY SCOTT

Born in 1840, Scott graduated from OU in 1862 (he would become the first OU president to also be an alumnus of this institution). As numerous biographical sketches report, he then worked in the Athens public schools, became principal of OU's preparatory department, and served as a minister in Chillicothe, Ohio, and the state capital of Columbus before returning to OU in 1869 as a "Professor of Greek Language and Literature," one of two professors that year to have "literature" in his title (*Ohio University Bulletin, 1869-1870* 5). (In 1869, no faculty members had *composition*, *writing*, or *rhetoric* in their titles, though students took classes in rhetoric and literature and in composition in English and classical languages. Course titles included "English Grammar," "English Composition," "Rhetoric and English Literature" [18], and "Forensics and Original Declamations" [19].) In 1872, upon becoming acting president of OU and professor of intellectual and moral philosophy (*Ohio University Bulletin, 1872-1873* 5), Scott began traveling between Athens and Columbus, a trip of over seventy miles each way, for a targeted purpose: to lobby for increased financial support from the state legislature. From Chapter Two, we might recall Scott's 1873 student Margaret Boyd, who wrote in her diary on Friday, January 24, "Scott has been at Columbus seeing about the interest of the college," among similar observations that semester. Scott's absences from Athens and thus from the elocution class that Boyd and other students took in Spring 1873 proved noteworthy to Boyd, and very possibly for other students, for its ability to alter classroom protocol.

Scott's lobbying produced modest results in the form of additional annual income to the university and funds to repair campus buildings (T. Hoover 143-44, 147; Super 62; Taylor 909), yet more important than those results was the tradition of traveling and lobbying that he normalized at OU. Later presidents, especially presidents Super and Ellis, would pick up where Scott left off and secure significant new revenue sources, establishing the financial base necessary to grow the faculty and multiply the departments and colleges. Scott's 1883

successor, Charles William Super, wrote that as president, Scott was a “financial agent” and a “perpetual lobbyist, as the [state] legislature met every year and the lobbying could not all be done at Columbus” (66). Super added, “[Scott] was expected to be everywhere and was assumed to be responsible for everything that was what it should not” (66). The responsibility that Super references gains meaning when we realize that, in Super’s words, “almost to the end of the nineteenth century the O.U. received no private donations” (74). In short, state funding operated as a lifeline to OU.

Without getting bogged down in the minutiae of legislative debates from the 1870s to the early 1900s, we should notice two changes approved by the State of Ohio that allocated significant amounts of money from selected taxes to OU and its sister institution, Miami University. First was the Sleeper Bill of 1896, which was viewed by historian Thomas Nathaniel Hoover as an outgrowth of President Super’s efforts to secure financial appropriations from the state (T. Hoover 161). Second, becoming law in 1902 and vigorously supported by OU President Ellis (T. Hoover 180), was the Seese Bill, which made a “provision for a State Normal College in connection with [Ohio] University, and [gave] for its support an annual revenue of about \$38,000” (Taylor 909). Throughout this time, Presidents Super and Ellis followed Scott’s earlier example by devoting time and energy to persuading state legislators to support OU, even traveling to Columbus during critical periods (see T. Hoover 180). Years before their presidencies, Scott’s “persistent efforts to secure an endowment” (T. Hoover 147) had included “begg[ing] the trustees” to convince legislators to heed their concerns (146) as well as attending state legislative sessions, even delivering the “prayer at the opening of the sessions” (147). With OU’s state-supported growth came new possibilities for composition, ways that college student writing could be attached to various professors and to course sequences with burgeoning enrollments. Nowhere do the interdisciplinary developments of composition in the post-Scott years appear as tellingly as in OU catalogs. So here I follow changes in catalog references to college student writing, often but not necessarily designated by the term *composition*.

CATALOG-BASED COMPOSITION

Between 1900 and 1950, the province of composition appears to stretch and bend given its relationship to subjects such as literature, creative writing, business, grammar, rhetoric, and teacher training, as faculty members in the decades after Scott’s reign harnessed composition to fit their newly supported specializations. OU’s Commercial College, formed in the 1890s, took composition in one direction, while its State Normal College, the degree-granting successor to

the 1886-founded Normal Department, took composition in another direction; furthermore, composition continued to be taught in the College of Liberal Arts. The liberal arts treatment of composition appears in the 1901-1902 Catalog's description of the Department of Rhetoric and English Literature:

The aim of the English Department is two-fold, to train the power of expressing thought, and to cultivate an appreciation of literature. In the classes in Rhetoric the main stress is placed upon the actual work in composition done by the student. In the study of Literature the endeavor is to quicken the artistic and aesthetic sense. (26)

Shortly thereafter, the Catalog relates, "*When studying Literature, emphasis will also be placed upon the practice of composition, and in the classes in Rhetoric much attention will be given to the study of Literature*" (26). As this section illustrates, the Department of Rhetoric and English Literature of the College of Liberal Arts framed composition in terms of its service to rhetoric and literature. Students studied rhetoric by composing, and students studied literature through, or in addition to, "the practice of composition." Students taking courses from the English department's curriculum had to complete six prerequisites, the first and sixth of the courses called "Composition and Rhetoric" (no description given); the remaining prerequisites consisted of English and American literature. In the Department of Rhetoric and English Literature's regular courses was "College Writing," which "plac[ed] stress upon paragraph-writing" (27). After this, students took "Public Speaking and Argumentation," which provided "training in public speaking, special stress being placed upon argumentation" (27). Not a logic course, the description continues, Public Speaking and Argumentation focused on "the principles of argumentation as used in every-day life" and required students to participate at least once in a "public debate given in the University Auditorium" (27). Other courses in the College of Liberal Arts in 1901-1902 dwelt on canonized literary works.

By contrast, OU's Commercial College, offering two years of preparatory courses followed by two years of regular college courses, approached composition in terms of its uses in specific professional capacities, usually capacities that privileged writing technologies. In 1901-1902, the Commercial College had three faculty members (compared to two faculty members in the College of Liberal Arts' Department of Rhetoric and English Literature), one of them in Stenography and Typewriting and the other of them in Penmanship. Another difference from the College of Liberal Arts was that the Commercial College prescribed "Elementary Rhetoric," which involved five recitations per week and was taken in the first term of one's first year of study (58). In the third term of

one's second year, the College prescribed "Advanced Rhetoric," also involving five recitations per week (58). In other words, the preparatory half of the Commercial College's course sequence began and ended with rhetoric classes, and each class was labeled so as to convey a progression: elementary to advanced. If a progression was intended in the College of Liberal Arts' courses on composition or rhetoric, then it escapes notice in course titles. Moreover, students in the Commercial College never strayed from an emphasis on writing, often writing via mastery of new technologies for producing text. Whereas students in the College of Liberal Arts prepared to write paragraphs and participate in oral debates, students in the Commercial College familiarized themselves with rhetorical principles before turning attention to the physical properties of writing in society. Commercial College students took both Freshman English (involving three recitations per week) and Penmanship during all three terms of their third year of coursework; then students took Stenography (with five recitations per week) and, across three consecutive terms, Typewriting (59). This sequence of courses situated writing in a world that extended beyond academic conventions.

Finally, and most tellingly, the rise of elaborate course sequences in education at OU, when the State Normal College was founded in 1902, gave composition and rhetoric another slant—pairing it with teacher training and exposing it to a greater number of students, especially female students. This was eleven years before Ohio's first independent state normal college was founded in Kent to the north and twelve years before its second independent state normal college was founded in Bowling Green to the northwest (see Ogren 227). Although since the early-mid 1800s Ohio had had private normal *schools* as well as nondegree teacher training programs within public universities, including Ohio University (Ogren 17), 1902 marks the first time when a state-sponsored, degree-granting college within a university in Ohio appeared and therefore the first time when such a configuration could shape public college students and their writing. OU's Summer School, for example, posted gains in both its overall student population and in its female student population in the years around 1902. The Summer School population was 38% female in 1899. By 1903, the Summer School population had grown to 62% female, and by 1906 it was 68% female (*Ohio University Bulletin, 1906-1907*). These changes extend Christine A. Ogren's finding, based on several institutions across the country, that women comprised the majority of state normal school populations from 1870 to 1910 (65). OU had had a Department of Pedagogy since the 1880s, but the pace of change in the university's overall student population, course offerings, and stance toward teacher education increased markedly in the wake of the Seese Bill-founded State Normal College. The 1901-1902 Catalog explained, "it is proposed to make [the new Normal College] somewhat broader and more distinctively professional than that of the

present Pedagogical Course of the University” (77). The Normal College appeared to pursue this breadth and professionalism by offering students a two-year course sequence equivalent to high school or preparatory courses, completion of which earned students a diploma. A second option in the Normal College existed for short-term studies, and yet another option was “a more thorough professional course, covering a full four-year period and, while clearly differentiated from them, the equal, in scholarship and training power, of any of the existing college courses. This course will lead to the degree of *Bachelor of Pedagogy*” (77). One of the greatest changes between the old Department of Pedagogy and the new Normal College was that the latter claimed equality with the other colleges at OU. Additionally, catalog listings after 1902 suggest that the Normal College took composition as or more seriously than the College of Liberal Arts did.

To appreciate the new directions in which the Normal College took composition, we should first notice the relative stagnancy in the College of Liberal Arts’ treatment of composition. In 1902-1903, as in previous years, the College of Liberal Arts included “Composition and Rhetoric” as the first and sixth courses in its preparatory course sequence. One change introduced at this time was that by 1902-1903 the Composition and Rhetoric course to be taken in one’s sixth term bore the catalog description, “a study of Description, Narration, Exposition, and Argumentation” (*Ohio University Bulletin, 1902-1903* 30). Changes in the College of Liberal Arts’ Rhetoric and English Literature Department included the fact that the department’s fall-term course College Writing had become College Rhetoric and now focused on “paragraph-writing and editorials” (30) as opposed to paragraph writing alone. Also, by 1902-1903, this course included a parenthetical notation marking it “required for all degrees” (30), and the department made minor adjustments to its literature course sequence.

By contrast, the State Normal College of 1902-1903 did not frequently use the words *composition* and *rhetoric* in catalog descriptions; however, this college’s perspective on teaching methods amounts to a surprisingly evolved, nuanced view of rhetorical practices. Here, clearly, attention to actions that fit specific purposes, audiences, and interests came to the fore. As the term *methods* was used in the Normal College’s descriptions of its mission and courses, it constituted one’s ability to see connections among ideas and academic areas:

instruction must concern itself with the development of human life, show how it manifests itself in the various occupations demanded by its nature, and how its growth is determined by geographical conditions. Here should be pointed out how geographical surroundings determine the occupations of men, affect their habits, promote their desires, restrain their ambi-

tions, and establish their supremacy or bondage. (75)

Implicit in this account is the role of location and social status in influencing people's tastes and ideas. The account's focus on situational factors and use of inductive thinking continues when it discusses methods for teaching history:

The teaching of history begins not with the book, but with the experiences of life. It should point out how law and order display themselves in the family, social, religious, and political life, and how they reflect various stages of thought and action. It should show how these institutions enhance the individuality of man, and how they are in turn reflected in and exemplified by him. (75)

Unlike descriptions of OU's College of Liberal Arts, these descriptions placed knowledge and everyday practices in history and in social configurations. And unlike many state normal schools' use of *methods* to mean the best way to teach a subject to a particular grade (Ogren 127), the meaning used by OU's State Normal College paired reading and writing with situated knowledge structures.

The Normal College of 1902-1903, like the College of Liberal Arts, offered courses in composition and rhetoric more heavily during students' earlier years of study. (Generally, students in the College of Liberal Arts took one class called "College Rhetoric" and no additional coursework in this area.) However, an important difference between the colleges was that the Normal College kept an eye on composition and rhetoric in students' mid-to-later years of coursework. The fullest attention that the Normal College gave to composition and rhetoric in its course offerings was in its course sequence for Elementary Education, entrance to which depended on graduation from a common school. But lest we conclude from this modest entrance requirement that the Elementary Education course sequence was entirely introductory, we should observe that students from more advanced course sequences could, with faculty approval, take courses in this sequence (137). In the courses for the Elementary Education sequence, we find

- Rhetoric and Composition taken in the spring term of one's first year, with five hours of work per week to be devoted to this subject
- Penmanship taken in the spring term of one's first year
- Rhetoric taken in the spring term of one's third year
- *Methods* in Reading and Composition taken in the fall term of one's fourth year, with three hours of work per week to be devoted to this subject
- College Rhetoric in the fall term of one's fifth year (132-33, emphasis added)

In addition, sprinkled across the five years of courses were more methods courses in subjects such as history and mathematics, the relevance of which grows when we recall the rhetorically rich description of *methods* used by the Normal College.

By 1905, OU found itself with two separate and simultaneously operating Departments of English, a situation not unheard of at the time. In her study of composition history at Massachusetts' Wellesley College, Lisa Mastrangelo found as many as three departments of English functioning simultaneously in 1906-1907, one department focused on literature, a second focused on language, and a third focused on composition (96). But the dual English departments at OU give us a surprising case of an English department in an education college, more so than an English department in a liberal arts college, pushing composition to the center of its curriculum. The 1923 student yearbook *The Athena*, published soon after the Normal College had transformed to OU's College of Education, summarized this development as follows:

English was given a department in the College of Education in 1905. Before that time English Composition and Literature had been given in the College of Arts, and courses in methods, in the College of Education.

With the growth of the University and the College of Education, it became necessary to have a department of English in the College of Education. There are now 450 students in the English Composition courses of the department.




This department has for its aims the development of expression, oral and written, and the acquiring of a love for good literature. It gives special attention to the methods of teaching English subjects. (*Athena* 72)

Here the development of the Normal College's English Department is linked to the "growth of the University and the College of Education," an increase in the number of students who hoped to benefit from formal training in teaching methods. Also, the writers refer to composition in conjunction with the department's total number of students, 450, and the writers acknowledge the department's aims (see Fig. 4).

In 1923, the College of Education-run English department was advertised as having four faculty members, just shy of the five faculty members in the English department of the College of Liberal Arts (*Athena*). Additionally, the student writers of the 1923 *Athena* offer little description of what actually transpired in the College of Liberal Arts' English Department, what priorities the department

held dear, instead giving the names of the department's past faculty members and noting historical facts such as when OU faculty members first taught En-

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Figure 4. English Department of the Ohio University College of Education, Athena, 1923. Courtesy of the University Archives, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries.


glish “as a subject” (in 1860) and when the faculty members first taught English Literature (in 1862) (51). Figure 5 illustrates such differences. Between the depictions of the two English departments in the 1923 *Athena*, it was the College of Education that articulated the *purpose* of its English department more fully.

Insofar as course descriptions speak, those of OU’s State Normal College circa 1920 provide what by modern standards is a more compelling vision of composition than those of the College of Liberal Arts. For example, in 1919-1920, the College of Liberal Arts offered a two-course sequence of Freshman English, which had “two definite purposes: (a) The endeavor to increase the student’s power of self-expression through emphasis upon practice in oral and written composition; (b) A systematic preliminary survey of English literature” (49)—that is, an emphasis on literature and on self-expression that interweaves composition, literature, and, implicitly, rhetoric in ways consonant with the 1901-1902 Catalog. Meanwhile, the 1919-1920 Normal College offered its own two-course sequence of first-year composition, “Freshman Composition, Teachers’ Course,” the first of which focused on “oral and written composition in narration and exposition” and the second of which focused on “oral and written work in description and argumentation” (133). The descriptions of Freshman Composition, Teachers’ Course, show the Normal College tying composition to oral rhetoric much as the College of Liberal Arts did. But unlike the College of Liberal Arts of 1919-1920, the Normal College’s English department specified modes of discourse that it taught, and this English department began to trouble the tendency to esteem imaginative literature (canonized fiction and poetry) above all else. Indicative of the latter is the fact that the Normal College’s English department of 1919-1920 offered a course for juniors and seniors called “The English Essay of the Nineteenth Century,” which focused on “the leading essayists and literary movements of the Victorian Age” (134). Allowing attention to nonfiction prose, this course had no equivalent in the College of Liberal Arts’ Department of English Language and Learning. Although the College of Liberal Arts’ English department did offer a course called “Advanced Composition,” this course “deal[t] mainly with the Short Story” (51) and thus treated composition as fiction writing. Alone, each of these observations says little, but when compiled for comparison they allow us to ask whether the College of Liberal Arts was ceding composition, viewed as the production of nonfiction text, to the State Normal College.

The 1919-1920 course titles above persisted through the 1920s, and by 1925-1926 the College of Education offered an assortment of courses on the essay, including English Essay of the Victorian Period and English Essay of the Eighteenth Century, as well as a Literature and Advanced Composition course whose scope included essays and fictional forms and whose assignments spanned

“creative and critical writing” (*Ohio University Bulletin*, 1925-1926 164). Also, College of Education students who took the course Teaching of Language in

English Language and Literature



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English as a subject to be taught in Ohio University was first mentioned in the college catalog of 1860. In that year French and German are dropped from the courses and the English language is mentioned, but no teacher is mentioned. This happened under the presidency of Solomon Howard. Two years later English Literature was introduced; it was taught probably by Rev. E. H. Guthrie or Rev. W. H. Scott, assistant. In 1866 the catalog contains the first mention of an instructor in English; Joseph F. Lukens appears on the faculty roll as “tutor in English.” In 1867 there are two “tutors in English;” in 1872 tutors are still “tutoring.” In 1863 Dr. W. H. Super, later president of the University, is listed as “Professor of Rhetoric and History.” Soon after this, however, Dr. Super appears as “Professor in Greek and Instructor in German.”

It is likely that H. T. Sudduth, A.M., is the first professor of Rhetoric and English Literature. His name appears in 1885, under the presidency of Dr. Super. Then appear Edward P. Anderson, A.M., Ph.D., 1888; Willis Boughton, A.B., 1892-1899; L. D. Milliman, A.B., 1899-1900, and E. W. Chubb, A.M., Litt.D., from September, 1900, to the present. The present English Department of the College of Liberal Arts is manned by teachers who have had graduate work at Berlin, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Chicago. There are ten sections in English Composition and numerous courses in Literature range from Chaucer and Shakespeare to Contemporary Poetry and Fiction.



B. L. JEFFERSON

ATHENA

Figure 5. English Department of the Ohio University College of Liberal Arts, Athena, 1923. Courtesy of the University Archives, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries.

the Junior High School focused on the topics of “composition as a social study, drills, freedom and accuracy in expression with study of models, spelling problems” (164). Mechanical though this last class may have become, it also gave attention to “freedom” in composing. No such course was listed under the English department of the College of Liberal Arts, whose students had to take College of Education courses as electives if the students wished to step outside of studies of imaginative prose and poetry. Other clues from 1925-1926 suggesting that the College of Education viewed the work of composition differently from its Liberal Arts counterpart include the College of Education’s stipulation that “a student must have an average of ‘C’ or above, or a ‘C’ or above in his last course in English composition before he may do student teaching in any school” (123). Moreover, those students who wished to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in education had to take two “Freshman Composition” courses and two literature courses, and those students who sought to teach English in high schools had to meet additional English requirements. Finally, in 1925-1926, the College of Education offered “Sub-Freshman Composition,” the only developmental writing course in that year’s catalog, described as “a course planned for those whose preparation has been insufficient to meet the demands of [first-year composition, here the version of first-year composition offered by the College of Education]. No credit” (163). The fact that this college alone offered developmental writing points to how it connected its mission to composition: College of Education faculty members treated their intellectual purview as entailing both the *preparation* of college students *for* college-level writing and the *instruction* of college students *in* college-level writing. By 1927, catalogs show that the College of Liberal Arts began offering a developmental writing course that was described in nearly identical terms as the one offered by the College of Education a year earlier, perhaps an attempt from the College of Liberal Arts to keep up.

Drawing cause-effect connections between President Scott’s 1870s-1880s lobbying of state legislators and OU’s early 1900s treatment of composition in its colleges and departments is unachievable right now. But the analysis unfolding here, which privileges signs of influence instead of a single and presumably knowable cause and effect (Jarratt, *Rereading* 17), illustrates how a historical narrative anchored by dyanton can begin to develop. Such a narrative recalls Gorgias’ work to complicate causal chains (Jarratt, *Rereading* 17), and it extends the possibility-generating project to the history of composition. From this OU narrative emerges a picture of college composition comprised of moving people and ideas, with a lobbying tradition normalized by Scott serving as at least one factor in enabling his successors to oversee rapid and significant growth in students, colleges, departments, and course options. In turn, these factors appear to have allowed composition to take many forms and meet many academic

and professional needs. Seeing this string of associations reminds us that even though many early normal schools or normal programs embraced change, as David Gold has shown (119), such an embrace was not merely or necessarily a product of a disciplinary outlook. At OU, the rise in state funding and the popularity of teacher training programs allowed faculty members and administrators to do numerous things with composition—to try out multiple conceptions of composition and multiple placements of composition in newly created curriculums. Also, contrary to John C. Brereton’s claim that composition after 1900 suffered “real damage” from its association with pedagogy (22; see also Masters 50), the case of OU allows us to see composition on the upswing, propelled by the direction of OU’s 1880s-1920s financial and student growth that favored the State Normal College.

COMPOSITION BEYOND COURSEWORK AT UH

Unlike at OU, many of UH’s earliest catalogs lack details, and course information takes the form of abbreviations and numbers. So I turn to travels of people whose names appear repeatedly across historical sources, such as the student newspaper *The Cougar* and the student yearbook *The Houstonian*, and whose names appear in association with college student writing. I see this shift in foci and source types as a way to apply the concept of dynaton to this research site: the shift lets me propose insights and idea connections that, based on available sources here, are neither known (what existing composition scholarship has established without question) nor merely ideal (what cannot under any circumstances be known). Revealing influences from other disciplines, departments, professions, and sections of the city and country, this evidence prompts us to consider how networks of composition scholars and instructors (e.g., Mastrangelo 61) can be enriched by extra-disciplinary contact. The figures singled out below show not only interactions between college students and different kinds of non-UH affiliates, but also opportunities for composition at UH to achieve new ends.

L. STANDLEE MITCHELL

Tracking 1930s HJC and UH faculty member L. Standlee Mitchell, who taught first-year composition as well as drama, means noticing influences from professional and community theater on HJC and UH students. It means, in effect, connecting the worlds of acting, directing, and local theater production to composition classes. Officially, Mitchell is remembered for chairing the UH Department of Drama from 1932 to 1950 and for serving as Dean of Men in the

late 1940s. Education papers that he left behind, including papers for teaching purposes and papers showing his own learning as a student, support the claim that he took writing seriously, and this claim stands even if we disregard his writing about theater. Among his education papers is a collection of short biographies and poems by Texans about Texas, for example, “Texas,” by Mary Saunders, which describes the beauty of the state’s natural landscapes. Also, Mitchell kept a list titled “Texas Poets of Past and Present” and a paper, “The Personal Relations of Whitman and Emerson,” which Mitchell himself wrote as a student (Mitchell). The latter earned him a grade of B, and his instructor commented that overall the paper was “well ordered, well written” (Mitchell).

As a teacher of first-year composition, or simply “English” as it was sometimes called in *The Cougar*, Mitchell was remembered for his interpersonal flair. In October 1934, one *Cougar* article summarized his teaching as follows: “If you think English is dull, register in Mr. Mitchell’s class. After listening to him for a while you will go back for more English as well as atmosphere” (“Rambling”). After then relating an off-color joke that Mitchell made in class one day (an unacceptable joke by today’s standards because it singled-out an African American student for linguistic ridicule), the article concludes, “No dull moments in Mr. Mitchell’s room” (ibid). If this student account accurately conveys some of the most striking features of Mitchell’s teaching style, then Rhetoric and Composition scholars today may feel tempted to view Mitchell’s teaching as an example of the “entertainer’s stance,” Wayne C. Booth’s 1963 category describing “the willingness to sacrifice substance to personality and charm” (144). However, Booth’s bifurcation of style and substance fails to do justice to Mitchell’s influence on the rhetorical education of students once we heed Mitchell’s interactions beyond the classroom.

Bearing in mind that composition in the 1930s was not necessarily controlled by people with specialized training in rhetoric, and definitely not training in writing processes, rhetorical grammar, and so on, we should notice instructors’ many ways of reaching students and of connecting students to the discursive and material worlds that the instructors inhabited. In Mitchell’s case, there was his work as director of UH’s John R. Bender Dramatic Club, which the 1934 *Houstonian* called “instrumental in giving the University some very fine entertainment in the way of plays.” In February 1934, *The Cougar* described a speech given by Mitchell to thank members of one of his recent plays and, suggesting Mitchell’s dedication to this line of work, related his announcement of “the intention of the club to start work immediately on another drama” (“Dramatic Club”). But it was his talent as an actor that temporarily drew him away from UH and into public entertainment. A March 1934 article in *The Cougar*, “Mitchell Acclaimed as Matinee Idol,” reported: “Mr. L. Standlee Mitchell, popular Junior College

professor of Freshman English and dramatics, has accepted the leading role in Catamount Cinema Col's current colossal epic, 'Desert Nights,' Dean N. K. Dupre announced today. [Mitchell] will emote opposite that seductive siren, Gertie Gabbo" ("Mitchell Acclaimed"). The article continued,

Mr. Mitchell was "discovered" by ... an agent from the Catamount Studios who, while attending Junior College assembly, heard him recite that flowers poem, "Ten Nights in a Bathroom." His inimitable rendition so impressed [the agent] that [Mitchell] immediately signed for the leading role in his company's ned [sic] desert opus. Mr. Mitchell will take the part of a young Abraïn shiek [sic] who captures a beautiful English woman and holds her for ransom. But when her husband, the gouty old Duke arrives with the money, a romance has blossomed between the desert chieftain and his lovely captive. The heroine decides to renounce her peerage and remain to find happiness in the arms of her true love. (ibid)

The article ends by reporting that production on the drama would wait until Mitchell finished the current school term and that UH would miss him. Yet if Mitchell left, he returned by October of that year because by then he reappeared in articles in *The Cougar*.

At issue given my interest in Mitchell's movements is that UH students, here students who wrote for their school newspaper, noticed some of the associations to which Mitchell's work led him. Much as some of the students lauded Mitchell's teaching for its entertainment value and invited more students to experience his classes first hand, the students commended Mitchell's activity in drama for attracting, through a studio agent, a broader public. The fact that Mitchell later returned to UH further supports the possibility that his trans-site and transdisciplinary movements bore on student writing at UH.

HARVEY W. HARRIS

Although identified first and foremost as a speech instructor and debate coach, Harvey W. Harris, or "Mr. Harris" as he was referenced in student publications, was the only faculty member listed in the 1928 *Cougar* as instructor of HJC's two Composition and Rhetoric courses, English 113 and 123, and he was only instructor listed as teaching English 213, a survey of English literature ("Period to Be Hour"). English 113 was described as "A study of the principles of good writing, analysis and discussion of the representative English and American essays; special emphasis on Exposition and Argumentation; one thousand

pages of outside reading; weekly themes.” Its more advanced partner, English 123, was described as “A continuation of English 113; emphasis on Description and Narration; study of representative short stories; weekly themes; collateral reading” (ibid). So in 1928, the person charged with leading HJC students through weekly theme writing, exemplary literature, and expository and argumentative writing followed by descriptive and narrative writing was a faculty member whose commitments were split between writing and reading on the one hand and speech, mainly extracurricular speech, on the other hand.

Harris’ speech commitments were multiple and significant. From Chapter Two, we might recall the comments in the 1934 *Cougar* about demand for Harris’ speech classes: “Due to an overcrowded condition in Public Speaking I, the class has been divided into three sections with a chairman over each section. Mr. Harris, instructor, tries to be present in all three classes simultaneously, and comes nearer to accomplishing that feat than one might think” (“Rambling”). That same year, Harris sponsored a group called the Speakers’ Club, which “held regular meetings throughout the school year,” meetings “devoted to discussions of every day [sic] problems for the purpose of speech improvement. In addition to training, the club also sponsored a number of social events during the 1933-’34 term” (*Houstonian*). Additionally, the 1934 UH yearbook lists Harris as coach of UH’s Oratorical Association, containing thirteen students, four of them women. The organization was

composed of all the people interested in public speaking. This organization has been instrumental in making the school known in the field of debate. The school has participated in eight debates, having lost only two.

During the year elimination contests were held on each question, thus giving each member an opportunity to represent the College in intercollegiate debates. (ibid)

The description concludes, “This organization combines the features of each variety of debating society to produce something both unusual and helpful to the students of the College” (ibid). Thus, acting as a speech coach, writing instructor, and literature instructor, as well as promoter of UH’s student activities on and off campus, Harris shows another way that composition could interact with other sectors of academe and student life before the rise of an academic field called Rhetoric and Composition.

If the roles above failed to fill Harris’ time, he had the added duty in 1928 of chairing HJC’s Social Committee (Shepperd). Between this responsibility and the social side of his Speakers’ Club involvement, he appears to have co-planned student activities, a job that would now belong to a staff member with graduate

training in higher education and student affairs. And based on the following observation from the student newspaper, Harris' roles were appreciated: "An affable and a valuable organizer, a promoter and a dependable coworker is found in Prof. Harris, who also knows his stuff on salesmanship." Then the writer adds a specific point of praise: "When the committees on dance programs and ticket sales follow [Harris'] advice, increased attendance is noted at every fair" ("Introducing—Our Faculty").

One consequence of Harris' work at HJC and UH was that his students' education was informed by experiences gained off campus, even beyond Houston, such as when students debated members of other colleges and universities. One such occurrence received favorable coverage in a 1928 *Cougar* article, "U.T. [University of Texas] Debators Lose to H.J.C.," which related, "H. W. Harris, instructor in public speaking, former coach of the varsity coach [sic] of the Houston Junior College debating team at Texas, and now team [sic], revealed plans for bringing the Southwest Texas State Teachers college debaters to Houston within the next few weeks" ("U.T."). But off-campus influences also affected HJC students indirectly, through Harris' experiences and reputation and thus his ability to draw outsiders to HJC. One 1929 issue of *The Cougar* described Harris as follows: "head of Public Speaking, received his M. A. degree from the University of Texas. Mr. Harris is widely known as a public speaker and lecturer" (*The Cougar*, 1929). In light of Harris' responsibilities and accomplishments, we may revisit the simple descriptions for English 113 and English 123, both called Composition and Rhetoric, and propose the possibility—alongside multi-site and multi-disciplinary possibilities generated by tracking L. Standlee Mitchell—that Harris bridged the courses with developments from public speaking. An analysis of the course lists alone, without tracking Harris' many activities, fails to open up this HJC/UH narrative to the array of factors that likely colored how students viewed the work and place of writing.

MARY TREADWAY

If the physical, professional, and disciplinary travels of Harris and Mitchell show directions in which composition headed under the influence of charismatic and devoted instructors, 1930s student Mary Treadway shows how student writing could connect to drama at HJC and UH as well as how city literacy clubs could support student writing. In 1934, Treadway served as a member of Mitchell's Dramatic Club and a member of the Student Council (*Houstonian*). In addition to attending meetings of these clubs, she delivered a congratulatory address after one of the Dramatic Club's plays ("Dramatic Club"). In moments like this, we begin to see Treadway's contributions to the clubs as part of

a rhetorical education broadly conceived, an education involving skillful writing and speaking for occasions beyond the writing classroom. Furthermore, her involvement in these student activities acquires wider significance once we notice that Treadway received an academic scholarship from the Houston Delphian Assembly, a local chapter of a national women's organization ("Organizational Information"), and that the Houston Delphian Assembly took a special interest in female students who demonstrated creative or artistic promise. At its 1933-34 meetings, assembly members discussed Treadway's talents in the area of music, particularly voice. By a March 1934 meeting, the members reported, "Mary Treadway ha[s] been elected president of her class in Junior College" (ibid). In March 1935, the assembly members announced that Treadway had "given up her scholarship" and that the scholarship would now transfer to another female student (ibid). In subsequent years, the assembly members would go on to fund not one student at a time, but up to twenty students during any given year.

Treadway's sponsorship by the Houston Delphian Assembly is a case of a civic organization with national ties supporting a UH student and monitoring the student's movement into leadership positions. Although the assembly neglected to single out English majors for scholarships, it supported college-facilitated writing or rhetoric in other ways. Created to develop a creative writing guild with a dramatic emphasis, the assembly looked for students who showed potential in these areas, according to a 1935 statement by the assembly's president. In practical terms, the assembly supported, even worked at, UH performing arts events such as operas (Williamson); funded scholarships; and gave money to the Departments of Biology, Speech Pathology-Audiology, and Arts, as well as to the UH library ("Houston Delphian"). Singling out and supporting sectors of HJC and UH such as the library and the arts, the assembly sponsored what today we might call a literacy education or, if recognizing the interplay of the political and the poetic, a rhetorical education. After all, as part of her student activities, Treadway created texts (e.g., speeches) in order to achieve a particular goal. Too, the fact that students at HJC and UH were required to complete first-year composition suggests that even students who were enrolled in this course may have received financial support and regular check-ins from the Houston Delphian Assembly.

Students' contact with this local chapter of a national women's group, a chapter that encouraged students' movement through classes and student organizations, alerts us to local-but-not-*just*-local interests that bore on some students as they wrote, spoke, and otherwise interacted with texts at HJC and UH. Given the Houston Delphian Assembly's literacy sponsorship, it begins to seem less surprising or inevitable that other historical records at UH show creative writing to have been alive and well in and beyond classes called composition, from the 1930s on. At least part of the rising visibility of creative writing, which other

colleges and universities witnessed during the early-mid 1900s (Ritter, *To Know*; Myers), might be attributed to interests taken by civic organizations.

RUTH PENNYBACKER

Finally, composition at UH can be seen anew if we track an English department faculty member who traveled locally and nationally, someone who brought influences from many other people and places when she joined the UH faculty in 1935. I refer to Ruth Pennybacker, a Texas-raised Vassar graduate who taught first-year composition and creative writing and who, as Chapter Four discussed, sponsored UH's first literary magazine, *The Harvest*. Of all the faculty members whose names circulate around issues of student writing in the UH archives, Ruth's (I use her first name to distinguish her from her mother, Anna Pennybacker) is arguably the most prominent. Even now, I hear tell of early UH alumni who sang Ruth Pennybacker's praises for, among other actions, entering students in national writing contests and otherwise valuing students' writing.

One of the interactions that appears repeatedly in accounts of Ruth's life is the interaction between Ruth and her mother, Anna Pennybacker (often referred to as "Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker" in newspaper articles), a figure known across Texas and eventually across the nation. A graduate of Texas' second-oldest normal school, Sam Houston Normal Institute (Ogren 232), now Sam Houston State University located seventy miles north of Houston, Anna became a teacher in a rural Texas school where her husband served as principal. Early biographer Helen Knox claims that Anna quickly gained respect through her oratorical skills, for example, by telling ghost stories to her students on the first day of class or, when dealing with adults, by supporting her points with stories about famous figures such as Napoleon (Knox). She gained the respect of other Texas citizens by speaking at the Texas State Teachers' Association about the power of education to teach patriotism and "true citizenship" (qtd. in Knox 62) and by writing a textbook, *A New History of Texas for Schools*, which was soon adopted by schools across the state and praised for evoking "Texas spirit" (Knox 86). But most important for my purposes is the fact that from 1912 to 1916 Anna served as president of the National Federation of Women's Clubs, an association that sponsored regular meetings of women who sought self- and civic improvement, from bodily and home cleanliness to fundraising for neighborhood libraries, to events that brought in out-of-town speakers to discuss topics of wide public concern. Given her status as a women's club president, a letter from Anna Pennybacker could garner local or national attention, as evidenced in her monthly letters published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and in her letters to certain Houston-area women's clubs ("Twenty-Six"). In recent scholarly work, too, Anna

Pennybacker appears when, for instance, Anne Ruggles Gere introduces the first chapter of her book-length history of women's clubs by quoting from one of Anna Pennybacker's articles published in the 1918 *General Federation of Women's Clubs Magazine* (Gere 19-20).

During certain points in her own lifetime, Anna's presence eclipsed that of her daughter in published accounts of their civic work. Newspaper articles across the country, from small-town Texas papers to the *New York Times*, announced talks that the two gave together and often introduced Ruth in terms of her mother—Ruth as the daughter of the “past president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs,” as one 1931 *Pittsburgh Press* article put it (“Southwestern”). Also in the 1930s, Ruth entered the distinguished society of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, likely owing to Anna's associations with the Roosevelts (see “Mrs. Pennybacker, Club Leader”; “Mrs. Pennybacker Dies”). For example, in 1931 the *New York Times* reported that Ruth, a “lecturer on literary topics and personalities,” was to be a special guest at a luncheon given by Eleanor Roosevelt (“Mrs. Roosevelt”). Without negating daughter Ruth's ability to write and network, I want to point out that Ruth joined the UH faculty while her nationally known mother was still alive and, partly due to that fact, was a well-connected hire. One late-twentieth-century UH historian wrote that Ruth “knew many of the [Houston area's] leading families,” as indicated by the fact that Ruth “was a houseguest of Governor and Mrs. William Pettus Hobby when [Ruth] first came from Austin to join the [UH] faculty in 1935” (Nicholson 162). A similar point can be made on a national scale given that by 1937, mother Anna, then president of the Chautauqua Women's Club of New York, invited several prominent women to speak at the club's summer events series. Among the invited speakers were Eleanor Roosevelt and Ruth Pennybacker, and by that time Ruth taught at the University of Houston, a fact noted in publicity for the Chautauqua Women's Club (Suzanne).

Although Ruth lacked her mother's clubwoman record, Ruth's teaching and supervision of student writers at UH, discussed in Chapter Four, show a kinship to her mother's national civic work, a kinship that allows us to see Ruth's approach to teaching and supervising as indebted to her interactions beyond UH. We might remember Ruth's connections to her mother when, for instance, Ruth encouraged her students to write about what they know and when Ruth ensured that even her first-year composition students took their writing public by adding their writing to UH's first literary magazine.

LESSONS FOR LOCAL HISTORIES OF COMPOSITION

In the tradition of the sophists Poulakos describes who prioritized dynaton in their reasoning, I pose the narratives above to emphasize “the known boundaries

of the world but [also to urge my audience] to go beyond them” (“The Logic” 21). For me, the “known boundaries” refer to conventions guiding the creation and comparing of local histories of composition: with discipline- or site-specific perspectives and with geographical nearness in mind. My relatively brief re-seeing of these conventions may encounter resistance, as is often the case with proposals of new possibilities (Poulakos, “The Logic” 22). So let me clarify that I intend my reframing of composition, from composition occurring in classes by that name and located in assigned academic buildings, to composition as writing practices involving people who traverse disciplines, professions, and physical places, to be suggestive. It extends Donahue’s suggestion about migrating ideas, Drew’s metaphor of travelers, and Mauk’s point about interacting discursive and material places in an effort to “fire the imagination” of readers about research and teaching possibilities. At the same time, it adds multi-disciplinary layers to recent histories that centralize the role of networks in shaping composition (Mastrangelo). I hope that my reframing complicates readers’ understanding of what it could mean to be a student who was refining her language skills for college activities before the 1950s. Among other things, it could mean associating with glocal figures or entities that could include state governments, competing universities, professional and academic fields, and nationally or internationally known leaders. For those of us doing historical research, following movements like the ones illustrated above help us see composition and its affiliates as every bit as complex as we know them to be today—something that the labels *instructor* and *students*, and even *composition*, don’t always invite us to examine.

Concerning cross-site comparisons, differences remain between the historical cases of OU and UH, and each kind of historical document can illuminate only part of what happened at any given point in time. But tracking points of contrast can be as generative as studying similarities. For example, a possible rural-urban difference worth exploring further is whether other rural universities pleaded their financial cases to state legislators in the way that OU did and whether other city universities associated with local women’s clubs and artistic events in the same way that UH did: was the former a rural phenomenon and the latter an urban phenomenon? Additionally, a pattern suggested by my evidence from both OU and UH is that pre-1950s composition, despite institutional specificity and peculiarity, developed through the work of people beyond English studies and exposed students to multiple disciplinary or occupational groups. In these institutional cases, literacy sponsors who shaped composition, altering what it meant to be a student writing for college credit, consisted of people whose commitments lay in what today would be called a borderland between discipline- and department-specific work and between social and professional work. So if we want to understand how composition grew in the early 1900s, we

should treat *composition* as a nexus of interests from the surrounding institution and from broader social, political, professional, and disciplinary configurations. At OU and UH, composition evolved as instructors moved into new roles that included lobbyist, actor, and socialite, and as students found new roles, including teacher and debater.

If applying this pre-1950s information to the present, we should remember that by the 1960s, composition was growing into Composition, to become the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Also, even if our physical surroundings resemble past or present Appalachian Ohio or Houston, Texas, we aren't living in the political environment experienced by OU's William Henry Scott or the social environment experience by HJC student Mary Treadway. However, while heeding these differences, we can notice tensions that circulate across time in higher education institutions. Today, many of us, as instructors and scholars of composition, observe changes in state funding for higher education, as any number of articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* attest, and we witness changes to university-community partnerships (e.g., internships, scholarships, service learning). Although organizations such as women's clubs and college debate societies have transformed since the early 1900s, we find new approximations of these entities, or entities that serve a similar purpose as the historical organizations, in non-profit education programs for adult learners and underprivileged teens and in college forensics teams where students write and deliver original orations. To help us investigate which kinds of people and organizations today push college student writing to do new things, rather than drawing only from well-known influences within English and from institutions near or structurally similar to our own, we should ask ourselves: how are our associations, especially our associations outside of Rhetoric and Composition, leading us to people and ideas that follow us back into our classrooms (or to our interactions with composition students in offices, conference rooms, coffee shops, online spaces, or the like)? What historical associations seem worth updating and trying out in a contemporary setting? As I show more fully in Chapter Six, options for re-seeing the work of composition at our college or university may be vaster than we initially think.