CHAPTER 3. TRANSFORMING A LOCAL WRITING TRADITION, 1971–1977

> The core of the present UNH freshmen English program was established when Don Murray directed the program in the early seventies
>
> – Gary Lindberg, New Methods in College Writing Programs

> The late 1960s and the early 1970s must be seen as a time of fundamental change in the teaching of writing. It was during this period that Donald Murray purified Freshman English at the University of New Hampshire.
>
> – Thomas Newkirk, "Locating Freshman English"

> Today we swim in an ocean of composition theory but when I taught my first Freshman English class thirty years ago I was offered no theories and, in fact, when I asked my department head told me, "One doesn't talk about teaching methods. That's a matter of academic freedom."
>
> – Donald Murray, "Tricks of the Trade"

In the third epigraph, above, Donald Murray recalls a time during his early years on the faculty at UNH when English professors might have spoken about the *what* of teaching writing but not so much its *how*. Within the liberal culture orthodoxy that reigned in the Department during the period when Murray was a student and, briefly, when he returned as a faculty member, the key pedagogical imperative was *exposure*—exposure to literary texts and other key elements of the western cultural tradition. *How* one exposed one's students to these things was, by Murray's testimony, apparently one's own business and not something which necessitated discussion. In the minds of some faculty members of the department's second epoch, teaching's how, at least as Murray recalls it, was off-limits, a matter of "academic freedom."

Over the course of his first years on campus and then throughout his career at UNH, Donald Murray worked to oppose this don't-ask-don't-tell approach to teaching and learning. With the help of numerous others, Murray worked to revise and transform the teaching of writing and to make discussions of composition pedagogy, in Freshman English and beyond, a normal aspect of department (and campus) life. His efforts to, as Newkirk puts it in the second epigraph above, "purify" Freshman English consisted, eventually, of removing all of the normal trappings of a college composition class, i.e., assignments, readings,

grades, conceptual material, and even, as we will see, class meetings themselves. In this way, Murray helped establish at UNH during the early heady years of the writing process movement an approach to composition pedagogy grounded in the experiential knowledge of the professional writer as he understood the term. This method, which gained the university a national reputation in composition teaching, came to serve as a model for countless others in the emergent field (see, for example, Moran). At UNH it was an approach which, as we learn from Gary Lindberg, a literary scholar who directed Freshman English in the 1980s, would guide the teaching of composition at the university for many years to come.

In this chapter, I offer, first, an exploration of the conditions on campus at UNH that made Murray's reforms possible before moving on to describe the processes by which he and his collaborators worked to create a new kind of college composition class at the university. If the story of the last chapter was one of Murray's partnerships with school teachers and, in particular, NESDEC, to reform the teaching of writing in secondary and primary schools, the story of this one centers on his collaborations with colleagues at UNH to reform the teaching of college composition. On the one hand, it's a story about how Murray and others worked to integrate elements of the university's long-standing extracurricular writing tradition into the curriculum. On the other hand, it's a story about how Murray and others went beyond that tradition to challenge the existent approach to the teaching of composition that arose at the university during the English Department's second epoch. Cumulatively, it's a story about how Murray and others built on the writing culture that Dr. Carroll Towle established at UNH during the war years, preserving the institution's reputation as a "writer's university" while extending it to become a writing *teacher's* university, all while laying the groundwork for it to later become a writing *researcher's* university, as well.

TIMES A' CHANGIN'

As we learned in an earlier chapter, when Donald Murray enrolled at UNH in the late 1940s he joined, as he put it, a "community of men and women who were writers, or who dreamed of being writers." As we observed with Tirabassi, however, this community was largely an extracurricular affair. The teaching of writing within the formal curriculum at UNH during the pre- and post-war years, and especially within general education, was rooted in a conservative curricular vision that was typical of the era (see Masters).

Beginning in the 1960s, however, change began to come to the UNH English Department, change which impacted all aspects of its work, including its methods for teaching composition. First, there was the natural attrition of the

faculty. Epoch Two professors who had arrived in the 1930s and shaped the vision and direction of the department throughout the middle years of the twentieth century were, by the early to mid 1960s, passing the torch to a new generation of faculty members. Dr. Bingham, perhaps the strongest advocate of the liberal culture project, stepped down as department chairman in 1966 and retired a year or so later. With his departure came the closing of the department's second epoch and a gradual relaxing of its commitment to the liberal culture ethos. One tangible sign of this change came in 1968, when the department revised the English major to once again allow students to take writing and other non-literary courses towards completion of the major. English became, then, once again, no longer synonymous with just the study of literature and liberal culture.

A second important change that took place around this time occurred in 1962 when the novelist Thomas Williams—an alum, like Murray, of the UNH English Department—was promoted from an instructor position onto the tenure track, becoming, in the process, the first creative writer to achieve such status. Williams' advancement and the subsequent hiring of a stable of additional writers into tenure-line positions in the years that followed was notable in a department that had long prioritized literature and those who could teach it over writing.[36] From a faculty perspective, then, the UNH English Department became, in the 1960s, a place that was hospitable to, even welcoming of, writers, and this inevitably changed the department's orientation towards its work and its sense of identity.[37] By 1973, when future Pulitzer Prize-winner and U.S. poet-Laureate Charles Simic arrived, fully one-quarter of the tenured or tenure-line faculty members in the department were writers. These men, "the writers," as they came to be called, transformed the department during the dawning years of its third epoch.

A third significant factor impacting Murray's work at UNH during 1960s and beyond was one that affected the university as a whole, but contained specific implications for English. With the arrival of the baby-boomers on campus

36 In 1967 the novelists Mark Smith and Theodore Weesner joined Williams and John Yount, who was hired in 1963, on the tenure track. Alongside these full-time professional novelists was a growing cohort of part-time/adjunct instructors and graduate students who were writers or aspiring writers, including, at one time or another, John Irving, Ursula Hegi, Alice McDermott, and Russell Banks.

37 Viewed within the context of the growth of creative writing in higher education at this time, these changes make sense. As Myers has argued, the post-war period was one when universities came "to provide institutional sanctuary for the arts, including literature" (148). From the 1940s through the 1970s, and especially paralleling the 1960s boom in post-secondary enrollments, new undergraduate and graduate programs in creative writing were established with rapidity at U.S. colleges and universities (Myers 146-49). Thus, the story of the growth of writing, and creative writing, in particular, at UNH can be understood as a local story but can also be placed within a larger narrative about disciplinary change in English at this time.

in the early 1960s, UNH's student body began to grow, nearly doubling by the end of the decade. This increase in students forced change in virtually every aspect of university life.[38] In the English Department, this meant a shift towards a greater reliance on contingent faculty members to teach the growing number of sections of Freshman English. During the 1964-65 academic year, just seven part-timers are listed among department personnel (*Bulletin* 1964-65 167). By 1966, that number doubled (*Bulletin* 1966-67, 181). It peaked in 1970, when seventeen "Instructors" were listed *(Bulletin* 1969-1970 171-72).[39] As notable, in 1966 a non-tenure track faculty member was appointed to direct Freshman English for the first time (*Bulletin* 1966-67, 181). The incredible increase in the number of students and the attendant shift and expansion this forced in department personnel within English created a new hierarchy within the English Department , creating two distinct groups or classes, the "junior" and "senior" faculty. This division would soon create problems, particularly in the teaching of Freshman English, as junior faculty members grew frustrated implementing what they perceived to be an outdated curriculum that they were hired to teach but had little voice in creating.

Fourth, and finally, it's important to note that UNH, as an institution, underwent considerable transition and reinvention during the latter post-war years. As UNH historian James has shown, from the late 1940s on the university worked to shift its institutional profile in the direction of doctoral education and faculty scholarship. In keeping with this change, the English Department commenced work on a doctoral program in the early 1960s, the first in the College of Liberal Arts, (it would take the entire decade to bring the program to fruition).[40] As English faculty were given a reduction in their teaching loads to make time for more scholarly endeavors, as these same faculty members shifted their intellectual energies away from undergraduate and towards graduate education, and as new faculty members with hefty research credentials and impressive publication records were hired to bolster the department's scholarly credibility, the UNH English Department became a different kind of place in the late sixties

38 According to UNH historian Marion James, immediate post-war enrollment at UNH stood at around 5,800 students. By the mid to late 1960s, the student population had grown to over 10,000 (9).

39 With a new doctoral program coming online around 1970 or so, pressure to hire part-timers eventually abated as Freshman English was increasingly taught by graduate teaching assistants. In this way, the UNH English Department's labor practices caught up to what had been happening elsewhere in college English for decades.

40 While the exigence for the creation of this program was entirely local, it's worth noting that graduate programs in English were on the rise across the US in the 1960s. According to Geckle, the number of graduate programs in institutions of higher education increased by over 50% during the decade (43).

and early seventies. No longer a sleepy backwater in which most English faculty were committed to undergraduate and general education and almost all ascribed to a genteel liberal culture tradition, the department became, in the 1960s and beyond, a place that was concerned less with the preservation of knowledge and more with its creation.

In sum, numerous factors, some local to UNH, others generalized across higher education, coalesced in the 1960s and 1970s to create a transitional institutional environment in which Donald Murray and others could make the case for curricular and pedagogical reform. The times were a' changin', as the old lyric goes, and while Murray, 39 when he transitioned to college teaching, was not *of* the times, he tapped *into* them as he worked to advance arguments for educational and disciplinary change.

IN FRESHMAN ENGLISH

According to Thomas Masters "Arnoldian ideology" permeated and infused college composition instruction in U.S. higher education during the pre- and post-war years (106). Masters found that part of the teaching of composition at this time was "the production of texts that would demonstrate the degree to which students had learned standards of correctness and rudiments of academic style" and part of instruction focused on "the reading and discussion of literature" (136). So it was at UNH, where the catalogue description for Freshman English from 1946 through the late 1960s described the class as "The training of students to write correctly and with force and to read with appreciation and discernment the chief types of literature" (*Bulletin* 1946 211). Further, Tirabassi's detailed analysis of Freshman English in the 1940s confirms that it was a standard affair for its time, with a first semester course centered on expository writing and a second semester class focused on literature. Both English 1 (later 401) and 2 (later 402) were organized around a tightly scripted schedule of readings and assignments from which faculty members were not to deviate. In English 1/401, students learned about various concepts of expository writing, i.e., coherence, unity, clarity, but also style, paragraphing, and sentence structure, and they read essays that served as models of exemplary composition, examples to illustrate writing concepts, and tools to instill the liberal culture subjectivity. They wrote ten themes in English 1/401, half of which were composed in class.[41] In English

41 Students were allowed to choose the content of their themes but seem to have frequently run with bland topics, as suggested by the banal and milquetoast titles they gave their pieces, e.g., "Campus vs. Home," "Leaving Cherished People and Things Behind," "The Jump from High School to College." As sample papers from the era illustrate, some instructors line-edited students' work mercilessly and demanded they edit and resubmit to receive credit. So determined, in fact,

2/402 students read and wrote about literary texts selected for their significance to the western cultural tradition and wrote a research paper. Archival documents from the period suggest that the discussions of the Freshman English Planning Committee tended to center on such workaday topics as whether to introduce a new reader into English 1/401 or how many themes to have students write in class as opposed to out of class. Rarely, it seems, was the overarching purpose of or rationale for the course considered or questioned. As a result, little changed in the teaching of Freshman English at UNH from the mid 1940s through the early to mid 1960s, and given the long reign of department chair Bingham, who frequently served on the Freshman English planning committee, we should not be surprised at the continuity and consistency of the program.

From the moment he arrived on campus in 1963, Donald Murray articulated reservations about the teaching of Freshman English. In his report to Dr. Bingham on his first semester in the classroom he writes,

> Since I have been appointed to the committee planning this course for next year, I will express my questions about the course through the committee. In general I feel it is important that the students be given an opportunity to write. . . . The majority of the students have not had to write in high school, and I feel that I must in Engl. 1 prepare them for the writing they will have to do in college. (Report on First Semester)

Rather than assign the ten required themes in his section, Murray goes on to explain that he assigned seventeen. A few students, he reports, "developed some understanding" of the principles of composition. Several months later, in his report on the second semester, Murray returns to this issue of the quantity of writing assignments in Freshman English: "I believe that writing in itself teaches writing," he explains, "and the students desperately need more writing assignments." Further, he argues, students must "rewrite to learn anything about the craft of writing." He will, he reports, conduct a small experiment when teaching English 1 again in the fall, whereby he will require students to rewrite or revise about a third of their pieces. "I want [my students] to experience the craft of writing and rewriting," Murray explains in a passage that foreshadows arguments he would go on to develop in the years to come. "I want them to approximate whenever possible the job of the professional writer" (Murray, Report on Second Semester).

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was the Freshman English faculty of this era to do right by its colleagues across campus in its commitment to root error out of student writing, a policy was created which allowed any UNH faculty member to remand back to Freshman English at any time any student whose writing was found wanting.

Despite Murray's growing reputation off campus as a kind of writing guru, he was passed over twice as director of Freshman English during his early years on the faculty. Perhaps he wasn't passed over, though. Perhaps he was sufficiently busy writing and field-testing *A Writer Teaches Writing* and seeking grant funding for a national program to reform the teaching of composition in K–12 education that it never occurred to him that he might *want* to become director of Freshman English.[42] We'll never know for sure. In any event, Murray moved on from teaching Freshman English and serving on its planning committee in 1966, but penned, on his way out the door, an exhaustive five-page single-spaced memo to the committee outlining his concerns about the course and its teaching (he had secured tenure and promotion earlier that year).[43] As he makes clear in his memo, Murray found the aims and purposes of Freshman English at UNH to be almost totally incomprehensible. If the course was supposed to be a general education class, he asks, why did some faculty treat it like "an introduction to the humanities"? If, in the eyes of many in the department, it was deemed a "remedial course," why were there honors sections? And if faculty were not, in English 402, teaching a course that was intended to serve as an introduction to literary studies, as some in the department apparently claimed, what *were* they teaching? In the closing of his memo Murray underscores his over-arching confusion about the aims and purposes of Freshman English at UNH: "The important thing is to have a clear understanding of exactly what it is we want to teach," he writes (Freshman English). In this way, he echoes Albert Kitzhaber who, in his report on a nationwide study of Freshman English conducted around this same time, concluded, "There are quite as many things wrong with freshman English in college as with English in high school," many of which "arise from a vast uncertainty about aims, about content, about methods" (99). Murray seems to have found, in the local setting of UNH, an example of what Kitzhaber observed nationally. He was not, however, bent on trying to reform Freshman English at this time. He taught ENGL 402 for the last time in the spring of 1966, stepped down from the planning committee, and moved on.

42 Or, perhaps, as Murray indicates in a letter to a friend in the months just before he was eventually appointed director, in 1971, he "did not wish to become involved" in Freshman English, preferring, instead, to teach "courses which in no way impinge upon [his] colleagues'" areas of expertise. (Dear John)

43 Beyond his colleagues at UNH, Murray began to share his concerns about the teaching of college composition more broadly during these years, as well, publishing his first articles in journals aimed at post-secondary audiences, i.e., "Finding Your Own Voice: Teaching Composition in an age of Dissent," (*CCC*, 1969), "The Interior View: One Writer's Philosophy of Composition" (*CCC*, 1970), and "Perhaps the Professor Should Cut Class" (*College English*, 1973), co-written with UNH colleague Lester Fisher.

BIRTH OF AN UNWRITING CLASS

Between 1966 and 1971, as the UNH English Department launched a new doctoral program in literature and largely abandoned it to the "junior faculty," Murray got to work trying to imagine, on his own terms, a new kind of college composition course whose purpose was neither the remediation of students' writerly deficiencies nor their enculturation into the liberal culture ethos. The course he built served as a blueprint for a redesigned class once Murray took over as director in 1971. The seeds for this new course, English 501, Expository Writing, were planted in 1966 when Murray drafted a memo to new department chair Jack Richardson with a proposal for a sophomore-level advanced writing elective. The proposal stemmed from the fact that demand for Murray's services among UNH students was already exceeding supply. His experience trying to accommodate all who wanted a seat in Expository Writing had, he writes, "dramatized the need for a basic course in expository writing, which will serve the university in giving students something beyond 401 without getting them involved in the writing of fiction and poetry" (Guidelines).[44] One could have argued that English 401 *was* a "basic course in expository writing" that was intended to "serve the university" and ask why, if Freshman English was doing its job, students should need or want more, but Murray left such questions unasked.

In follow-up correspondence with Richardson from 1967, Murray goes into significant detail regarding his vision for English 501, the curriculum of which served as a distinct contrast with and departure from that of Freshman English. If Freshman English was a typical college writing course for its era, English 501 would be an atypical college *un*writing course. First, there would be no grades in English 501, or, at least, evaluation would be deferred until the end of the term. This, Murray insisted, would "reduce the pressure of writing for a grade" which, he felt, undermined the entire enterprise of learning to write effectively.[45] Second, in ENGL 501, there would no longer be the traditional "content" of a writing course typical at UNH, i.e., didactic lectures on abstract concerns such as style, organization, paragraphing, etc. The "content" would, instead, be "the student's own writing." Third, there would be little, if any, reading in English 501 and that which was assigned would consist mostly of "articles on writing by writers," so that students would "learn to see the problem of writing from the writer's point of view." Fourth, there would be no assignments in English 501, at least not in

44 As we saw in the last chapter, initially, expository writing to be taken by pre-service teachers. It was, however, once Murray began to teach the class, increasingly popular among regular English majors who were interested in writing, as well.

45 Murray's work in this regard anticipates alternative approaches to assessment that would follow in future years, e.g., grading contracts and, more recently, labor-based grading.

the traditional sense. Rather, each week students would write something new or revise something they had already written and instructors would provide feedback, ideally in conference, on work-in-progress. In ENGL 501, then, students would learn the skills of the practicing writer as Murray understood them by participating in a work cycle that looked less like that practiced by the typical college student and more like that of the professional writer (ENGLISH 501).

Murray first taught English 501 in the fall 1966. By spring 1971 six sections of the class were being offered each semester.[46] This created an opportunity for him to enlist others in the endeavor and to begin to think of himself in new ways—as a writing program administrator and a writing researcher. As to the former, Murray got to work in early 1971 to codify procedures for teaching in what was quickly becoming known as the English 501 "program." In a course overview document for students he describes the class as an opportunity "to learn to write by facing and solving the basic problems of the writer" and then answers three pages of imagined questions about the class (e.g., "You mean a student can write about anything?" *Yes.* "Will we have conferences with the instructors?" *Yes*. And so on.). In a separate document aimed at the English 501 staff, Murray outlines purposes and procedures for the course and identifies himself as the administrator. "Professor Murray will direct the course," he writes, "and he will have final say over the staff, approve the methods used to teach the course, participate in the planning and scheduling, and run a series of meetings for the staff." Having moved on from Freshman English, albeit temporarily, Murray had, it seems, created a new composition program all of his own making (English 501).

Beyond this new work as a writing program administrator, Murray's experience with English 501 also gave him the chance to become a kind of writing researcher. In a department where research and scholarship were the currency of the day and at a time when Murray was increasingly advising and teaching graduate students, his work in English 501 gave him the opportunity to begin to imagine himself as more than just a writer *teaching* writing but also, now, a writer *studying* writing and its teaching. In 1970, he teamed up with a young instructor, Lester Fisher, to write a grant to UNH's Council for Educational Innovation to address the "problem" of too-great demand for English 501. In their proposal, Murray and Fisher lay out an approach to composition pedagogy that challenges not just the idea that the class meeting is the essential element of a college course but that the semester is the essential unit of the college calendar.

46 Demand for English 501 continued to grow in the years to come, to the point that, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Murray again directed the course, the English Department offered about 40 sections per year. With an administrator and a staff that overlapped with that of Freshman English, English 501 came to function as a kind of secondary writing program within the department during these years. (Faculty Annual Review 1980-81).

They describe an experimental design for English 501 which emphasizes "the important parts of [a writing class]—student writing and instructor responding" and "eliminate[es] the traditional but possibly unnecessary class meetings."[47] In their experimental sections, they propose, rather than enroll twenty students, hold class two or three times a week, and conduct bi-weekly student conferences, they will enroll thirty students, eliminate class meetings entirely, and hold conferences with every student every week (Memo to Council for Educational Innovation). In addition to eliminating class meetings, Murray and Fisher describe an administrative structure for their experiment that will transform the traditional timeline of the semester. They propose that with a constant waitlist of students trying to get a seat in English 501, those who do not get a spot initially will be allowed to add the course later in a kind of rolling fashion, as seats come open. And seats will come open, they explain, because some students will be allowed to complete the course in an accelerated fashion while others, who fail to do the work, will be dropped. In this way, students who are unable to get a spot in English 501 at the start of the term will have the opportunity to register for, enroll in, and complete the course at various moments throughout the semester and the academic year (Memo to Council for Educational Innovation).

The Council approved Murray and Fisher's proposal and the two taught their experimental sections that fall of 1970. In November, they traveled to NCTE to share their findings, and a year or so later they brought the process to scholarly fruition by publishing an article about their work in *College English*, "Perhaps the Professor Should Cut Class." In the piece Murray and Fisher share what they learned from their "experiment." Here are a few highlights:

1. *On the importance of not over-teaching*: "It is not [the teacher's] responsibility to correct a paper line by line, to rewrite it until it is his own writing" (172).
2. *On spoken response being more effective than written*: "In conference the student and the teacher may read each other's voice and face until they are sure they understand each other" (172).
3. *On teaching by conference being pedagogically efficacious*: "[A]ll the predictors of success in composition—test scores, academic record, social-economic background, maturity—simply d[o] not predict individual performance" (171).

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47 In a letter to an administrator a few years later, detailing his responsibilities at the college, Murray offers a memorable analogy to try to convey why he deems the writing conference to be the essential activity of a composition class. "I teach little in class, a great deal in conference," he explains. "That's the way it has to be. I don't teach my students in a bunch any more than my doctor can give everyone in the waiting room the same pill" (Letter to Dr. David W. Ellis)

In the end, Murray and Fisher acknowledge that while their experimental approach likely didn't succeed with all students "almost all of those who made a genuine commitment to their work [regardless of background] improved demonstrably" (173). Of course, we should take Murray and Fisher's optimistic conclusions with a grain of salt, but we should also acknowledge the boldness of their experiment and their efforts to develop an innovative solution to a complex institutional problem while simultaneously pushing composition pedagogy in more student-centered directions.[48]

Murray's work developing, administering, and then researching and writing about English 501 gave him important experiences to draw on when the opportunity to become Freshman English director presented itself in the late spring of 1971. No longer a writing "guru" with a following of mostly K–12 teachers, Murray was, by the time he took over as Freshman English director, a curriculum designer, a (lightly) seasoned writing program administrator, a writing researcher of sorts, and a published author of writing aimed at a national audience of college English professors. From 1968 on he was increasingly invited to give talks and lectures on writing and pedagogy at colleges and universities in and around New England and the country. In 1970, he secured a contract with the publisher of *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Houghton Mifflin, to produce a college level textbook ("Faculty Annual Report, 1970-71").[49] In 1972, he joined forces with Professor Tom Carnicelli to teach in a federal grant-funded initiative to train junior college faculty in composition pedagogy. Also in 1972, he was invited to apply for the position of editor at *College Composition and Communication* (he declined) (Letter to Robert F. Hogan). All these developments signal Murray's growing stature within the community of college writing teachers and scholars at this time.

REFORMING FRESHMAN ENGLISH

In the second epigraph at the start of this chapter, Thomas Newkirk makes the claim that during a time of "fundamental change in the teaching of writing" Donald Murray "purified Freshman English at the University of New Hampshire" (3). To say that Murray purified Freshman English is to suggest that it was,

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48 There is evidence that the innovative administrative structure of the experiment, with rolling admissions and completions, was not entirely a success. In Murray's annual report for the year 1970-71 he writes, "We taught English 501 without class meetings and entirely by individual conference. That was the part of the experiment that was most effective" ("Faculty Annual Report, 1970-71")

49 Murray wouldn't publish a textbook aimed at a college audience for another dozen or more years. In 1984 he published the first edition of *Write to Learn*. The following year, 1985, he brought out his first college reader, *Read to Write*.

in its pre-Murray state, somehow corrupted, but, really, as we have seen, it was mostly just *typical,* a product of its time. To be sure, once ensconced in the position of Freshman English director, Murray did implement reforms to the course, and he drew, to a significant extent, on his experience with English 501 to do so. Under his leadership, weekly meetings were created for the Freshman English staff, conferences became a more central element of instruction, literature (and reading, in general) was all but banished from the curriculum, and instructors were encouraged to find ways to disentangle formative from summative assessment. In short, under Murray's direction English 401 came to look a lot like English 501, and this would be the case for many years to come.

Surprisingly, very few documents from Murray's years as Freshman English director survive in his archive to document the years he worked as the course's administrator. It's an unusual archival omission from a man who wrote copiously about most aspects of his work in his annual musings and saved virtually everything. "I hope I have created a productive diversity in the approaches to Freshman English, and was able to support individual teachers as they attempted to solve their own problems in the teaching of [the course]," he writes in his 1971-72 annual review, the only time he mentions his work as director in any detail in his reviews ("Faculty Annual Report, 1971-72").[50]

An accounting of Murray's weekly hours at the university in his 1972-73 annual review suggests that if he had little to say about directing Freshman English or little desire to leave a record of his directorship it was, perhaps, because administering the course was not an aspect of his work which stood out from the others or one with which he identified strongly. By his own accounting, Murray estimates that he allocated about 1½ hours per week to the Freshman English Committee and about five hours to his duties as director. These allocations can be contrasted with the number of hours he spent advising students (five),[51] serving on the college Promotion and Tenure Committee (six), teaching (thirty-one), and engaging in professional & scholarly activity (twenty-two). These numbers suggest that service obligations *other than* running the college writing program could take up nearly as much of Murray's time as administering Freshman English.[52] In sum, then, and given his frankly astounding level of service

50 Of course, it is likely that Murray was required to write reports on Freshman English each year, but if he did these are not in his archive. Again, a curious omission.

51 While this number may seem excessive, Murray notes in numerous of his annual reviews the amount of time he spent advising both undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom were not, technically, his advisees. His student evaluations confirm that Murray was incredibly generous in this capacity, guiding students on questions about career paths, helping to set up and coordinate internships, and providing references for employers.

52 Notably, Murray continued to serve as the de facto administrator of English 501 while he directed Freshman English. ("Faculty Annual Report, 1973-74").

commitments during these years,[53] Murray may have seen his work as Freshman English director as just one among many responsibilities and obligations at the college and not a career defining role as many WPAs view their work today.

Documents written by Murray's successor in Freshman English, Thomas Carnicelli, paint a vivid picture of his (Murray's) impact on the program and the degree to which his work in English 501 anticipated a revised curriculum for English 401. In a short piece penned for the UNH Parents Association around 1976, Carnicelli identifies "the heart" of Freshman English as "the individual conference between student and teacher." "In a conference," he explains, "the student and the teacher sit down together and discuss the student's paper in detail. We find this a much better way of responding to student papers than the old method of writing copious, often unreadable comments in red ink." Acknowledging the unorthodox nature of this approach, Carnicelli explains that the conference method had proven "highly effective" and was one of the elements of Freshman English that students commented upon most favorably in course evaluations ("Freshman English at UNH").

Another "special feature" of Freshman English at UNH circa the mid to late 1970s that can be traced to Murray was the course's emphasis on revision or what Murray often called, in his early days, "rewriting." As Carnicelli explains, Freshman English's "emphasis on revision as an essential part of the writing process" is a hallmark of the UNH approach. Students, he writes, "come to us expecting to write a new paper every week and to have every paper graded. We see no educational value in doing things that way." Instead, he explains, Freshman English instructors envision students' weekly papers as "drafts, not finished products." If a draft shows potential, the instructor will help the student pursue it further. If not, the student will be free to move on to something else. "Professional writers revise the same piece time and time again," Carnicelli points out, "but student writers are rarely given the same opportunity." In Freshman English, he continues, they will be given the chance to write and revise "without the constant pressure of grades," which will be assigned at the end of term, another Murray innovation ("Freshman English at UNH").

Finally, near the end of his letter, Carnicelli addresses the elephant in the room in the teaching of Freshman English: grammar instruction. Here he largely

53 Here's a full accounting of Murray's committee assignments from his 1971-1972 annual review (the first year he served as Freshman English director): The Graduate Council, Promotion and Tenure Committee (College of Liberal Arts), Student-Designed Major Committee (chair), Athletic Council, Advisor to *The New Hampshire* student newspaper (therefore de facto member of the university Board of Governors), Graduate Committee (English Department), Freshman English Committee (chair), Personnel Committee (English Department), Committee for the EPDA Junior College Program. "I was disastrously over-committeed," Murray notes, of his commitments that year, "although I rejected many [additional] assignments."

reiterates Murray's approach, as articulated in numerous of his early publications. "Many people," he acknowledges, "feel that 401 should place heavy emphasis on the study of grammar." While good grammar is important, he concedes, "first things should be taken care of first. Before a student can even begin to write a decent paper, he or she must find a subject, something to say." Once this is accomplished instructor and student can work together to address additional higher-level concerns such as clarifying one's audience and purpose, developing an organizational structure, constructing an appropriate tone, etc. "Only late in the process of revision," Carnicelli explains, "do we focus our attention on grammar, [at which point] we often find the grammar problems have disappeared" ("Freshman English at UNH").

In Carnicelli's parent letter, but also in his Freshman English guidelines and other administrative documents, we find clear indications of his predecessor's influence. But it's not just Carnicelli. As we saw in the epigraph above from then-Freshman English director Gary Lindberg, over a decade after Murray had moved on from running Freshman English it was still possible to trace the program's vision to him. "If there is a philosophical core to the Freshman English program at UNH," Lindberg writes in the opening lines of his Freshman English manual circa 1985, "it is that we treat our students as writers and our staff as teachers. There is no subject matter the students are being led through, no 'knowledge' they must absorb. Instead, we want them to experience what writing is all about" (Teaching Freshman English).

A trove of Freshman English syllabi from 1987, the year Murray retired from the university, confirms Lindberg's assertions. Virtually every one of the twenty-five syllabi I examined from that fall term requires students to purchase one of Murray's two textbooks. Every syllabus describes the requisite five pages per week of new or revised writing. Every syllabus articulates the weekly conference requirement. And every syllabus describes important pedagogical aspects of the class that can frequently be traced back to Murray's vision. One syllabus describes a central purpose of the course as "to introduce you to the idea of writing as a means of discovering and ordering ideas and information." Another touches on the importance of revision, defining the concept as "a complicated and involved process which alters and (hopefully) improves the structure, thoughts, organization, language, etc. of a piece of writing." A third highlights an aspect of Freshman English that was consistent across all sections at this time: student choice in defining a topic. "A writer's first task," explains the author of this syllabus, "is to find something to write about, and choosing a topic will generally be up to you."

Murray's colleague and friend at UNH, Andrew Merton, who directed Freshman English in the early 1990s, perhaps best articulates how the "philosophical core," as Lindberg put it, stayed true to Murray's intentions, even in the years

after his (i.e., Murray's) retirement from the university: "We set out to teach our students to become authorities, to engage their readers, and to revise," Merton writes in a 1992 pamphlet directed to the entire UNH community ("Freshman English"). "To do this, we must get our students to think of themselves, not as students, but as writers." As Merton's words suggest, twenty years after Murray directed Freshman English at UNH his successors were still defining the basic work of the course largely on his terms.

CONCLUSION

Murray wrapped up his work as Freshman English director in the spring of 1974, having served in the post for just three years (he did not teach the course during his tenure as director and only taught it once more before his retirement). During the 1974-75 academic year Murray served as Faculty Chairperson of the entire university. The following year, in the fall of 1975, he became English Department chairman, a post he held for two and a half years, just shy of one term, stepping down prematurely for reasons I'll go into in the next chapter. His years as chair were important and surprisingly productive given the time and energy his administrative commitments undoubtedly required. In his 1975-76 annual review, written in the spring following his first year as department chairman, of his "Professional and Scholarly Activities" Murray writes:

> The University of Buffalo invited twelve "authorities" in the English-speaking world to investigate areas in the writing process and point out the direction research should take in the years ahead. Half-a-dozen of us at a time spent a week-end at Buffalo giving our paper and responding to other papers. This was an exciting and stimulating time for me, and the paper I gave, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," has been well received and has led to further invitations. It will be a chapter in a book to be published by the National Council of Teachers of English.
>
> The paper led to an invitation to participate in a seminar at Rutgers University, and the paper given there, "Teach the Motivating Force of Revision," is scheduled to be a chapter in another book.
>
> The Buffalo paper led Dr. Richard Lloyd Jones of the University of Iowa to ask me to participate in a seminar on theoretical problems in rhetoric at the Conference on College

> Composition and Communication in Philadelphia. The paper I gave there, "Reading for Surprise," further develops some of the ideas proposed at Buffalo, and is being prepared for publication.
>
> I was also invited to give a major paper and to participate in a seminar at the Secondary School English Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English in Boston. These papers allowed me to develop my ideas further on the process of internal revision and the implications for teaching.

Ten years earlier, untenured, untested, and still new to academe, Murray had reported to department chairman Jack Richardson on his initial efforts to persuade local high school teachers to reconsider their approach to composition pedagogy (Memo to Jack Richardson). Now, in 1976, he narrated the trajectory of his scholarship—the invitations to share papers, the research seminars with authorities in the field, the pending publications—like an academic rock star. "Although I have planned a role within the group of academics who are investigating the writing process during the last ten years," Murray writes, "I received more professional recognition of that role this year than I have in the past." "My most satisfying work," he continues, "has been in my continuing exploration of the writing process and how to teach it" ("Faculty Annual Report, 1975-76").

With his NESDEC collaborations in the rear-view mirror, his term as Freshman English director over, and his stint as English Department chairman concluded, Murray could have moved on from reform work in the late 1970s and returned to his finally fulfill his creative writing ambitions. Instead, he entered a new period of professional growth and development as a teacher and scholar of composition as the writing process movement gained steam all around him, including at UNH, and as a growing community of writing researchers, with their social science-based investigations into "process," caught up to him.[54]

As we will see in the next chapter, in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, with the help of numerous others, Murray doubled-down on his efforts to reform composition pedagogy, in large part due to the emergence of this new "group of academics" who had joined him in investigating the writing process. He greedily immersed himself in the new writing research and worked to find ways to contribute to it in his own unique way. At home, at UNH, he helped

54 My phrasing here is intentional and reflects Murray's own sense of how things unfolded. Writing about the second edition of *A Writer Teaches Writing* in the Preface of the revised second edition, Murray writes "I had extended my investigations into how published writers created their drafts and how that information could be shared with students. In addition, I had been joined by many other teacher-researchers who were exploring the same territory and instructing each other" (xi-xii).

launch initiatives that transformed UNH from a *writer's* university and a writing *teacher's* university into a writing *researcher's* university. Having defined himself as an outsider within English, where discussions of pedagogy were not to be entertained, Murray was an immediate insider within the gathering writing process movement, finding, in a new generation of writing researchers, a community of like-minded writer/teacher/scholars with whom to investigate writing, its learning and its teaching.