Composition Forum 40, Fall 2018

What We Talk About When We Talk About Donald Murray: Revisiting *A Writer Teaches Writing* at 50

Michael Michaud

Abstract: In this Retrospective I revisit Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing*, fifty years old this year, and argue for a reconsideration of Murray's legacy within composition and rhetoric by claiming that the frame with which scholars and teachers of writing have tended to understand Murray (i.e. Donald Murray = Expressivist) is limiting and fails to do justice to Murray's broader contributions to the field's disciplinary ethos.

If you're like many teachers and scholars of composition and rhetoric trained after the year 1990... 2000... or 2010... Donald Murray is a name you likely know, but probably not particularly well. You may have met Murray on the page in graduate school—probably you read his canonical "Teach Writing as Process Not Product" in *CrossTalk*, maybe you skimmed "When Writer's Block Isn't" in *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*, perhaps you taught "All Writing is Autobiography" while experimenting with the Writing About Writing pedagogy. Odds are good, though, that if you have read Murray at all, you haven't read him much, and that if you haven't read him much you haven't read any of his books, including *A Writer Teaches Writing* (*AWTW*), his first book of writing *about* writing{1}, published fifty years ago this year. There are a number of reasons, beyond the fact of the book's anniversary, to read (or reread) *AWTW.* My goal here is introduce (or reintroduce) the book to scholars and teachers of composition and rhetoric and to persuade them, to persuade *you*, of the book's ongoing significance to our field.

While it's possible to revisit *AWTW* for its pedagogical utility, I suggest readers approach the book mostly as an artifact of our disciplinary past. Published in 1968, four years before Janet Emig's seminal *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, *AWTW* sheds light on an important and sometimes-neglected period in our field's history, the pre-writing process years of 1964-1970 (see Fleming, 2011). The book illustrates how many of the innovative pedagogical strategies and approaches to writing pedagogy that came to be taken as gospel in the 1970s and 1980s were already in place in some quarters pre-1971. Revisiting *AWTW* also reminds readers of composition and rhetoric's sometimes forgotten roots in English Education (see Stock, 2011). Murray spent two years collaborating with a group of high school English teachers to write the book and it was written largely to persuade school teachers to change not just the way they teach writing, but the way they teach, *period*.

Which brings me to a third and final reason to revisit *AWTW* on its anniversary year. Regardless of the extent of your exposure to Murray and his work, there's a good chance that what you talk about when you talk about Donald Murray looks something like this:

> *Donald Murray = Expressivist*

I won't argue that this frame is wrong{2}, but there are other conceptual frames we can use to talk about Murray, and when we read or reread the first edition of *AWTW*, these become evident. The fact is, via *AWTW* and other early publications, at a critical moment in our field's disciplinary development, Murray helped establish key beliefs and values about teaching and learning that shape our work down to the present day. If we are a field that invites and celebrates diversity, is committed to equity and social justice, works to provide greater educational access to all who seek it, and takes as a central element of our work the empowerment of all learners, this is due to the work of early teacher/scholars like Murray who, through books like *AWTW*, helped instill in writing teachers and researchers the humane, ethical, and reformist ethos to which we still adhere. In short, if readers are willing to momentarily pry Murray from the *Donald Murray = Expressivist* frame, revisiting *AWTW* at fifty will provide them with the opportunity

to understand and appreciate Murray as an important disciplinary and educational reformer who, from the publication of *AWTW* forward, worked to change not just the way writing is taught but the way teachers and students go about their work together in school.

A Historical Context for Revisiting *AWTW*

When I mentioned to my mentor, Thomas Newkirk, who worked with Murray for many years at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), that I was writing a retrospective on *AWTW,* he grimaced and confessed that he had never much cared for the book, especially its first edition. “It’s something about the writing,” he explained. “It’s stiff and doesn’t feel at all like the Donald Murray I knew or loved to read.” Newkirk’s not wrong to feel this way and since contemporary readers, too, may note the unusually dispassionate tone of the book, so different from the warm, enthusiastic, and engaging tone of so much of Murray’s later work, I’d like to say a few words at the outset here about the context of the book’s publication.

Murray transitioned to college teaching at age 39, when his former advisor at UNH invited him to apply for a position teaching journalism in the English Department{3}. There was little in his career trajectory to this point to suggest that he would become a college English professor, much less a teacher-educator and/or writing “guru.” According to his late career autobiographical writing, Murray hated school as a child and suffered considerably as a student in the public schools of Quincy, Massachusetts. As such, he was, as he wrote late in his life, “astonished” by his early “chutzpah” in setting out to write a book on writing pedagogy for high school English teachers since a) he was, himself, a high school dropout, b) at the time he began to write *AWTW* he had only been teaching for a few years, and c) by the mid-1960s he had not set foot in a high school classroom since failing out or North Quincy High twenty years earlier.

During his first semester at UNH, though, Murray was assigned to teach an expository writing course for pre-service English teachers that captured his attention. Since middle school, Murray had been studying the testimony of published writers and journalists on writing. During his years as a freelancer (1956-1963), he had taken small steps toward trying to understand his own writing process (his livelihood, after all, depended on it!), keeping daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly word counts of his output and analyzing patterns in his production. In expository writing he was tasked, for the first time, with trying to explain to non-writers what it is that writers do when they write and helping them to think about the pedagogical implications of their learning.

As Murray worked to try to understand and explicate his writing process and draw his students into his work, he decided he needed to learn more about how writing was actually being taught by practicing English teachers. He ventured out into the local community to listen and observe. What he found troubled him. The teachers, he felt, were not teaching writing much better than it had been taught in his day. None were writers or understood the process from the inside as a writer would (as he did). His experience teaching Freshman English during his first year at UNH only further confirmed his sense that writing pedagogy needed to be reformed.

In the fall of 1966, Murray was invited to give a lecture in Hollis, New Hampshire, based on the new approach to teaching writing that he was developing at UNH. There he was introduced to the man to whom he would eventually dedicate *AWTW*, Richard Goodman, a superintendent who was soon to become the executive secretary of a regional superintendent’s association, the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). Goodman drew Murray into what, in his dedicatory note, Murray wryly refers to as “the maze of elementary and secondary education.” With Goodman’s help, Murray began to give lectures on composition at NESDEC-network schools, created and taught his first graduate-level courses on writing and pedagogy, directed and taught teachers at an annual summer workshop at Bowdoin College (1967-1970), drafted a grant to seek foundation funding to enlarge the scope of his work beyond New England, and began drafting *AWTW*, which was eventually published in 1968 by Houghton Mifflin.

This brief history should help readers place *AWTW* within its historical context and explain the at-times detached or officious-sounding tone of the book. To read the first edition of *AWTW* is to read a writer who is testing new arguments with new audiences and in many cases trying to respectfully push back against received wisdom about writing pedagogy. It is to read a writer who has not yet claimed membership in what little disciplinary community existed at the time for teachers and scholars of writing. And it is, finally, and perhaps most interestingly, to read a writer who had no idea that he was in the early stages of shifting his entire intellectual energy towards a decades-long educational and disciplinary reform project that, a few years prior, he could never have imagined. To be sure, writing *AWTW* was a delicate balancing act—Murray wanted to establish his authority with school teachers, advance his “practical method of teaching composition,” and challenge the existing orthodoxy about writing pedagogy while not alienating those, like his colleagues in the UNH English Department, who were, at the very moment he was drafting the book, deliberating over whether or not he should be granted promotion and tenure. Given the constraints

of the rhetorical situation in which Murray was working, the dispassionate and authoritative tone that he adopted in *AWTW* was probably the wisest choice.

A Tale of Two Curricula

AWTW has both a curriculum and a *hidden* curriculum—the former focusing mostly on writing and its teaching, the latter focusing, more generally, on the relationship between students and teachers. Let's take these one at a time.

Curriculum

Earlier, I encouraged readers revisiting *AWTW* to try to leave the *Donald Murray = Expressivist* frame at the door. It's actually not a difficult task. While Murray encourages his readers (again, high school English teachers) to help their students find topics about which to write that interest them, he's not overly concerned in *AWTW* with autobiographical writing (as a writer-for-hire, very little, if any, of Murray's own published work at this point was personal in nature). For Murray, the important thing in teaching writing was not that the student open a vein on the page but that he or she own the content about which he or she was writing. So, for example, a student wishing to write an essay about how to ride a motorcycle might also be encouraged "to write a proposal for a new motorcycle law, a letter to the editor answering an editorial against motorcycle riders, a definition of a good motorcyclist, an argument for a new motorcycle design" (134). (With this passage, I'm reminded of my own recent affinity for Lunsford et al's *Everything's An Argument.*). In a writing class, Murray argued, students should write about a number of different topics in a range of different forms, modes, or genres (the more the better). The key thing was that they care about the content of their work and this was essential for several reasons. First, teaching in the Freshman English program at UNH and serving on the Freshman English Planning Committee, Murray became acquainted with the kinds of topics his colleagues often assigned (i.e. "How To Be a Good Friend In a Time of Need," etc.) and frequently found them trite, silly, and schoolish. He wanted students to be able to bite into topics that they, and not their teachers, found meaningful. Second, Murray felt that English teachers made a mistake when they tried to teach writing by asking students to write about literature. Many students, he knew, weren't all that interested in reading literature; they would be even less interested in writing about it{4}. Third, and most significantly, Murray wanted students to own the content of their writing so that they would have the stamina to stick with it to experience what he most wanted them to experience in a writing class. And what was that?

If there's one idea around which the official curriculum of *AWTW* is built it's the idea that student writers need to experience and understand writing as professionals do, which is to say as an activity in which individuals in the process of trying to say something to someone work to identify and resolve the myriad problems of composing that inevitably arise while writing. Professional writers, Murray knew, were, at root, *problem-solvers*. Student writers, inexperienced at the task, would not, Murray argued, be up for the challenge of experiencing what the professionals experience if they weren't deeply invested in the content of their writing. "The student must spend his time in the lengthy process of discovering and solving his own writing problems," Murray explains in *AWTW* (105). They wouldn't, he felt, have the energy to do so if their motivation to write in the first place wasn't grounded in a genuine desire to say something to someone about something about which they felt strongly.

For my money, the idea that English teachers must help students become writing problem-solvers, to view the writing process as one of working to resolve the challenges that all writers inevitably experience while composing (e.g., discovering effective arguments, identifying a workable structure, understanding the genre in which one is working, anticipating the needs of different audiences, etc.), is among the most valuable and interesting things Murray has to say about writing and its teaching in *AWTW*. Who else was talking about writing-as-problem-solving at this time? To the best of my knowledge, no one. It wasn't until the 1970s and 80s, when scholars like Janet Emig, Nancy Sommers, Sondra Perl, Linda Flower and John Hayes began to study what actually happens when writers write that we began to understand and develop a language to talk about the problem-solving nature of the work of writing. Murray's ideas pre-dated and anticipated this work. And they grew, ultimately, out of his concern with an issue that is very much at the heart of our field's work today: learning transfer.

Fundamentally, Murray saw his task in *AWTW* as one of analyzing and dissecting what it was he did when he wrote so as to identify a process that could be shared with English teachers who could then teach it to students who could then use it to navigate the numerous writing situations they would confront in school and in the world beyond. Given Murray's experience and the state of knowledge in the field of composition and rhetoric at the time he was writing, it was a project that made a good deal of sense. "How does the writer write?" Murray asks on the first page of *AWTW*. His answer: "We cannot discover how the writer works merely by studying what he has left on the page. We must observe the act of writing itself to expose to our students the process of writing as it is performed by the successful writer" (1). Such a process, Murray felt, would help students develop a transferable writing process. After all, as

Murray reminds his readers, “We are teaching writers who will write descriptions of automobile accidents and living room suites which are on sale, reports on factory production and laboratory experiments, political speeches and the minutes of League of Women Voters meetings, love letters and business letters” (154).

For Murray, “The process of writing as it is performed by the successful writer” consisted of seven core activities, which he outlines in the book’s first chapter. The writer, he argues, discovers a subject, senses an audience, searches for specifics, creates a design, writes, develops a critical eye, and rewrites. While the genre one writes may change, for Murray, circa 1968, the process one follows as a writer is always essentially the same. “If you can write a sonnet you can write an advertisement,” he argues late in *AWTW*, “if you can produce a novel you can produce a company report” (231).

Well, not really.

As anyone who has attempted to write a company report (or, more likely, written one as part of a team) will probably tell you, the genre is intensely specific to the rhetorical situation that necessitates its creation. Writing such a report likely bears little in common with the process of writing fiction. As Anne Beaufort (1999) has shown, writing processes are highly specific to the tasks and situations in which writers find themselves and depend, to a significant degree, on writers’ knowledge of and familiarity with the genres they are writing. Where Murray goes wrong, as we now know, is in believing that the process he followed to write freelance articles for newspapers and magazines (a highly specific process for a unique genre of writing) was transferable to *all* other writing situations. Where he erred, further, was in believing that there was such a thing, in the first place, as *the* writing process, singular{5}. This is why it’s probably best to read (or reread) *AWTW* not so much as a guide to composition pedagogy but as an artifact of a particular moment in the history of our discipline and its thinking. Like all books, *AWTW* is a product of its time, a time, in this case, when few, if any, empirical studies of writers writing had been published, when the term *rhetorical situation* had only recently been coined, and when the notion of genre in the English classroom referred mostly to literary forms (poems, novels, short stories, and plays).

In academic circles we don’t (or shouldn’t) blame earlier theorists and scholars for not knowing what later scholars would come to discover. In the fifty years since *AWTW* was published, our knowledge of what happens when writers compose and of how learning transfer works with regard to writing has broadened and expanded exponentially. As I’ve tried to show, Murray’s concerns for these issues in *AWTW* pre-dates and set the stage for much of what was to follow. His interest in reflection, too, anticipates what has become a major area of study in the field (“It's helpful,” Murray urges his readers, “to have students write about writing. [...] When you write about writing you have to focus on how to write as well as what to write, and the combination can be very helpful for the student” [170]). From the perspective of history, these are not small contributions to the knowledge of our discipline. They are, however, ones that will not be attributed to Murray or considered part of his legacy if we continue to talk about him using the *Donald Murray = Expressivist* frame.

Hidden Curriculum

I suggested earlier that *AWTW* has both a curriculum and a hidden curriculum. The curriculum, as I’ve shown, focused on writing and its teaching—it is the “practical method of teaching writing” promised in the second part of the book’s title. The hidden curriculum, perhaps harder to discern and not alluded to at all in the title, is woven throughout the book and has less to do with writing and its teaching than it has to do with the relationship between teachers and students. It’s in the hidden curriculum where we see Murray working to instill in his readers a pedagogical philosophy which should feel familiar to scholars and teachers of composition and rhetoric today, one which forwards the causes of diversity, social justice, opportunity, and empowerment which we, as a field, have made such an important part of our disciplinary ethos. Mina Shaughnessy is largely credited with embodying this vision during the field’s earliest days, but a decade before Shaughnessy, and a half dozen years before NCTE’s seminal “Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” Murray was working, in his own way, to inscribe in composition and rhetoric the deeply humane and student-centered vision of teaching and learning that has become characteristic of our discipline.

While the exigence for *AWTW*’s writing was, as we’ve seen, most immediately rooted in Murray’s work with NESDEC and local New England high school English teachers, a deeper exigency for the book can be traced to Murray’s own debilitating early years of schooling, an element of his autobiography he kept mostly out of his published work, especially early-on in his career. Deep into *AWTW*, though, and buried among other things, one finds evidence, as we see in the following passage, of the way in which Murray’s own personal story influenced and informed the vision of teaching and learning he was arguing for in the book:

> This may be the time to mention that I quit high school each year and did not graduate. My parents

> were told that I did not belong in school. When I see how quickly and how permanently many of our students are evaluated, I cannot forget the years when I was told I was stupid, year after year, and I believed it. The students and their parents usually believe us. (160)

As far as I have been able to tell, this is the only moment in *AWTW* in which Murray mentions the painful personal experiences that quietly informed the book's writing. From later publications, including a weekly column in *The Boston Globe* and two memoirs, readers learn that as a child and adolescent Murray felt himself to be an outsider in both his working class family and at school. Regarding the latter, he considered himself a casualty of what he dubbed the "not-so-good-old-days" of public education and of a Depression-era educational system that, he felt, failed to account for the diversity and difference—in knowing, in thinking, in learning, in communicating—that he brought to the classroom. To be clear: the personal context for *AWTW* was Murray's lifelong belief that he was, as a child, a victim of educational injustice{6}. His books and articles, starting with *AWTW*, were, as he sometimes put it, acts of "revenge" on a system that had, he deeply believed, failed him.

Given all this, it's perhaps not surprising that the word *listen* plays such a prominent role in *AWTW*. In his second chapter, Murray lists "He Listens" as the first of the seven skills that an effective teacher must learn. For Murray, inhabiting what might be called a *listening stance* was an essential element of ethical pedagogy. Teachers must learn to become effective listeners, he believed, so that they could see, understand, and, most importantly, accept each student as an individual. "When you talk to those teachers who motivate students," Murray writes, "you begin to see [that] they are all interested in knowing the student as an individual. They listen to the student and the student knows it" (151). This was, of course, a tall ask for high school English teachers facing 100-150 students a day, but Murray asked anyway, because he felt it was what those students were due (what he had been due) and, more practically, because he felt that a listening stance could be achieved if teachers would just spend less time talking.

As Murray goes on to explain, enacting a listening stance does not mean that the teacher must "accept the student's view of the world if it is irrational, illogical and expressed in an illiterate manner." It does mean that the teacher must "listen to what he has to say," not what he or she "wish[es] he would say but what he has to say. [...] Each student is at a different point" (16). This idea of *difference*, of each student being "at a different point," is another point that Murray develops and elaborates throughout *AWTW*, largely under the umbrella of acknowledging, accepting, and celebrating diversity (not a word he uses). "Each student," he writes, "is working at his own pace and his relationship to other students in the class is relatively unimportant." For Murray in *AWTW*, education isn't a race where one is measured against one's peers or against a single curriculum standard, it's a highly individual developmental process.

If the teacher must be a person who listens to the individual student in Murray's philosophy, who accepts and acknowledges his or her differences, and works to empower him or her as a unique individual who is capable of learning and deserving of an education, the classroom must become a different kind of place than what it usually is. In order for this to happen Murray advocates in *AWTW* for a role reversal between teachers and students. "The relation of the teacher to his students," he writes, "should be the opposite of the relationship one would expect to find." Usually, he continues, "it is the teacher who knows, the student who learns. Here it is the student who knows, or should, and the teacher who learns, or tries to" (17). In this way, in Murray's ideal classroom, the student reads and writes about the things he or she knows or wishes to know and by listening to the student (on the page, in the classroom, in conference) the teacher learns how to better teach him or her. In this way, the classroom becomes a place in which the teacher does research on students and their learning and adapts his or her curriculum accordingly{7}. Murray never uses the term *student-centered* in *AWTW*, but as all of this suggests, it's very much what he had in mind. In this way Murray, writing circa 1966 or so, very much anticipates and sets the stage for one of the key tenets of what would become the writing process movement: students and their processes of learning to write should constitute the "content" of writing classes.

Murray's progressive, student-centered pedagogy of listening, should, he argues in *AWTW*, serve as a corrective to more traditional pedagogies that conceive of students as passive consumers of their instructors' knowledge. "[T]he composition course does not pour information into the student," Murray writes, echoing the language of the radical educational theorist Paulo Freire, whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as Robert Yagelski (2003) has pointed out, was published the same year as *AWTW*. "Students as well as teachers have been confused into believing that learning is a passive process." Murray continues, instigating a metaphor he deploys throughout *AWTW* (and to good effect), that, sadly, "Some students (and perhaps some supervisors and parents) will feel that the teacher is not teaching unless he stands before a congregation of students and preaches" (133). Murray utilizes this analogy of preachers and congregants to contrast the active, individually-focused, agency-creating vision of teaching and learning for which he is advocating. And lest his readers accuse him of being soft or permissive, Murray emphasizes that in his vision the onus for learning, the *burden* of learning, must be borne by the student: "The teacher must make an effort to convince everyone involved that the student has a responsibility to teach himself" (133). For Murray, then, the student-centered classroom will be no less demanding or rigorous than a more traditional model (and probably

more rigorous).

As a savvy rhetorician anticipating likely push-back from his elders, Murray cues into the historical moment of cultural upheaval in *AWTW* to argue, finally, that a pedagogy of listening is perhaps most necessitated by the times. In an era of "mass society, mass communications and mass mind," Murray writes, there can be no more important task for a teacher than to empower his or her individual students to develop a sense of voice by listening to them (17). Further, he argues, tapping into the emergent social justice ethos of the era, "What we should do is attempt to give everyone freedom of opportunity [to learn] regardless of his background, his race, his religion, or the limitations with which he came to the classroom" (154). In offering all students the opportunity to write, which is to say to *speak*, to be *heard*, to be *listened* to, Murray invites his readers to situate the day-to-day work of teaching and learning in a truly humanistic vision. "A man's drive to tell another what he knows about life—to relate, to sympathize, to incite, to educate, to entertain, to persuade—starts with a baby's first cry and lasts until an old man's final words," Murray writes. "The effective writing teacher mobilizes this force simply by allowing his students to speak" (151). Within this vision, writing, finally, is an act in which "one single human being [is] speaking to another single human being" (17).

Conclusion

It's perhaps difficult for readers thinking with the *Donald Murray = Expressivist* frame to reconceive of Murray, a towering white male of Scots descent, as an advocate of what some have taken to calling concerns of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Murray never led with a social justice agenda. A child of the Depression and soldier in and survivor of World War II, he spent his entire life aspiring to and ultimately achieving a spot in the American middle (or upper middle) class. As so many baby-boomers of the 1960s and 1970s tossed aside the trappings of suburban lives to devote themselves to the abstract causes of EDI, Murray, who was a member of the so-called Greatest Generation, strove to make those same trappings available to his family (and took deep satisfaction and pride in doing so). His desire to do so was rooted in a childhood that, by his account, lacked equity, lacked an appreciation for diversity, and too often excluded those whose dispositions or needs fell outside the spectrum deemed "normal."

It's important for teachers and scholars revisiting *AWTW* during its anniversary year to try to see the book within the context of Murray's personal backstory. I've long thought it unfortunate that Murray wasn't able or willing to more explicitly ground his pedagogical arguments about writing and pedagogy within his personal story, for it would have given his readers a different frame with which to think and talk about him and it would have given him, especially later in his career, a way to situate himself within the field's evolving social and political orientation. It wasn't until late in his life, though, that Murray further unpacked the story of his working class roots and shared his narrative of educational disenfranchisement, largely in venues outside the view of scholars and teachers of composition and rhetoric. This story is there, though, in *AWTW*, for readers who know to look for it (and its implications) and who are willing to imagine that Murray had much more to teach his readers than what the subtitle of *AWTW*, a "practical method of teaching composition," promised. In the end, Murray was an educational and disciplinary *reformer*—and not just of writing pedagogy. It's within this frame, *reform*, that we can perhaps best understand Murray's work and his many contributions to our discipline on this, the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of his first book of writing about writing.

Notes

1. Murray wrote several books prior to *AWTW*, during his freelance phase, including two novels. (Return to text).
2. Take this passage, under the heading, "Where Do Writers Get Ideas?" from the second revised edition of *AWTW*: "Some ideas come from the deepest psychological concerns of the writer. Writing is my way of achieving moments of sanity or understanding. I came from a background that was filled with sin, guilt, and threats of Hell and damnation. I was brought up with a grandmother who was paralyzed when I was young, and it was my job when I woke up early in the morning to see if she was still alive. I was a sickly, only child in a world filled with the threat of disease and death, punishment and retribution, and much of my writing is a psychological necessity" (11). Clearly, as we see here, Murray championed expressive writing for its therapeutic value, though mostly later in his career and in his retirement. (Return to text).
3. Murray graduated with a degree in English from UNH in 1948. (Return to text).
4. Murray is so eloquent on this point, in a way that still resonates today, that I feel the need quote him directly: "It is a matter of dogma in many English departments that students have nothing to say until literature is poured into their heads. We cannot assume that literature is the primary interest of our students—or even that it should be. We must realize that the writing of literary analysis is but one form of writing. If we evaluate our students only on their ability to write literary analysis we will over-reward a minority and penalize a majority"

(106). (Return to text).

5. This was a trap into which Murray fell throughout his career, a kind of endless search for the holy grail, an articulation of *the* writing process. One can only go so far with this kind of work, of course, and Murray was perhaps slow to evolve. Evolve he did, though, as new evidence about what happens when writers write presented itself. In the 1970s, as researchers began to study in more rigorously empirical ways the writing processes of writers working in all kinds of situations, Murray began to draw on this research in his own published writing (especially the work of his UNH colleague, collaborator, and friend Donald Graves). In 1983, having studied his own writing process for years, Murray jumped at the opportunity to serve as a "lab rat" for Carol Berkenkotter, who invited him to be her participant in a new kind of "naturalistic" writing process study. By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Murray's thinking about process had evolved a good deal, as we see in this passage, taken from the Instructor's Manual of his book *Write To Learn*: "There is no one, correct, theologically sound writing process. The process changes according to the cognitive style of the writer; the experience of the writer with a particular task; the psychological makeup of the writer and the psychological climate in which the writing is done; the content of the writing, its purpose, its audience; the length of time in which the writer has to work; and the tools the writer is using" (24). (Return to text).
6. For a full accounting of the backstory, read Michaud, 2015. (Return to text).
7. This is the very kind of model of teaching that Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj argue for in their well-known WAC guide, *The Elements of Teaching Writing* (2003). (Return to text).

Works Cited

Beaufort, Anne. *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work*. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1999.

Fleming, David. *From Form to Meaning: Freshmen Composition and the Long Sixties, 1957-1974*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2011.

Gottschalk, Katherine and Keith Hjortshoj. *The Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in All Disciplines*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

Michaud, Michael. "Victims, Rebels, and Outsiders: Reconceiving Donald Murray." *Writing on the Edge*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2015, pp. 51-68.

Murray, Donald. *A Writer Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

---. *A Writer Teaches Writing*. 2nd Revised Edition. Boston, MA: Heinle, 2004.

---. "Not-So-Good Old Days." *The Concord Monitor*, 23 Jul. 1979, p. 10.

---. *My Twice-Lived Life: A Memoir*. Ballentine, 2001.

---. *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.

Smith, Jeanne Jacoby. "Anatomy Of A High School Dropout." *World and I*, vol. 13, no. 7, 1998, pp. 306-319.

Stock, Patricia Lambert. "Introduction: The Intertwined Roots of English Education and Composition Studies." In *Composition's Roots in English Education*, ed. Patricia Lambert Stock. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012. 1-25.

Yagelski, Robert P. "'Radical to Many in the Educational Establishment': The Writing Process Movement After the Hurricanes." *College English*, vol. 68, no. 5, 2006, pp. 531-544.

"Revisiting Donald Murray" from *Composition Forum* 40 (Fall 2018)

Return to *Composition Forum* 40 table of contents.

Composition Forum is published by the Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition with the support and generous financial assistance of Penn State University. *Composition Forum* ISSN: 1522-7502.