of marginalized groups such as the Athabascan. At the same time, Brown is explicitly concerned with using language and literacy education as a means to intervene directly in the unequal distribution of respect and resources.

In the borderland of composition studies, we cannot (at least for now) choose between the research methodologies employed by Scollon and Scollon and the theoretical strategies employed by Brown. We cannot choose because the differences between the two inform each other; the tensions between the two circumscribe the contemporary borderland of composition studies. We cannot ignore the unrelenting demands of globalization, and we cannot neglect the obvious disaffection of marginalized students. For this reason alone, *Words in the Wilderness* is an invaluable contribution to composition studies. Brown has taken up issues that are crucial to composition studies today: issues of positionality, theoretical practice, and disciplinary formation.

One of the best ways I know of to consider such issues is in the context of a graduate seminar that juxtaposes *Words in the Wilderness* with the work of Scollon and Scollon, and then contextualizes the pair with reflections on ethnographic methodologies and postcolonial critical strategies. In such a seminar, students would be introduced to the borderland practices and purposes of research in composition studies where they can (perhaps) push the boundaries of the field.


Reviewed by Katherine H. Adams, Loyola University

When a discipline or group seeks to gain greater respect, its proponents often turn to historical research to stress the contributions of ancestors. As the women's movement developed in the 1960s, for example, women's studies scholars reintroduced many forgotten writers of earlier periods. For example, in its first years the Feminist Press published books and essays by Mary Wilkins Freeman, Kate Chopin, Jo Sinclair, and Josephine Herbst, stressing in its editorial statements the great obstacles they had to overcome and the great potential of other women to join them if they
gained access to education and other opportunities. During the same time period, reformers in composition studies chose another form of politicizing the past. Instead of celebrating earlier glories, these scholars portrayed the previous hundred years as the hideous result of one stultifying theory gone awry—what Daniel Fogarty called in *Roots for a New Rhetoric* "current-traditional rhetoric." This term has since referred to a curriculum in desperate need of change, one involving grammar rules in early education and then rule-bound instruction in paragraphs and the five-paragraph theme in higher levels of education. It was a paradigm created by English rhetoricians George Campbell and Hugh Blair and continued by college textbook writers such as Alexander Bain, Barrett Wendell, A.S. Hill, William Cairns, and Edwin Woolley. When process theorists began attempting to change school and university writing instruction, which was a huge and expensive proposition, they portrayed this supposedly all-powerful curriculum as the enemy. They claimed that new methods of writing instruction were essential for correcting the mistakes of the past, and they thereby replaced one monolith with a more informed alternative, one that was to be exported from colleges to schools. Individual teachers were not portrayed here as stupid or incompetent but as misguided. New guidance was offered as a way to help them escape from the wasteland of a school essay type that had unfortunately become so indigenously American that it might be called, as Janet Emig labeled it in *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, "the Fifty-Star Theme."

This "college to schools" version of nineteenth-century pedagogical history certainly has validity. Many schools did adopt this part-to-whole, rule-based approach. But the political argument, which focused solely on the ascendancy of one model, has robbed us of the more complete sense of our history. In the last fifteen years, however, the stranglehold of this portrayal of "good versus evil" has loosened. In *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, James Berlin reintroduced us to Michigan's Fred Newton Scott; in "Radcliffe Responses to Harvard Rhetoric," Sue Carter Simmons took an even closer look at one of the arch-villains, Harvard's Barrett Wendell; in *Fencing with Words*, Robin Varnum provided a more complete picture of composition instruction at Amherst; and in *Toward a Feminist Rhetoric*, JoAnn Campbell examined the career of Gertrude Buck and the Vassar courses she instituted. *The Young Composers* also questions traditional historical claims. Instead of reexamining the university, Schultz turns her attention to schools and claims that instruction there was never so entirely dominated by college pedagogies as earlier authors have claimed. She agrees that
because of the lack of uniformity in nineteenth-century schools, many different texts and methods circulated there, and that schools were not the recipients of just one model that originated at the university. The century began as the familiar story maintains—with students studying grammar rules, parsing sentences, copying texts that were read aloud, and perhaps writing some original essays during high school on abstract and culturally approved themes, such as duty or justice. John Walker’s *The Teacher’s Assistant in English Composition* (1801)—an influential text that Robert Connors calls “the exemplar for a whole school of composition pedagogy”—outlined a complete curriculum for proceeding from part-to-whole by learning rules for words, paragraphs, and school essays.

Schultz argues, however, that although this curriculum was quite influential, many schools never came, or didn’t remain, under its sway. By the 1830s, when the number of common schools that had no college preparatory function was growing, when Jacksonian democracy was creating changes in the social order, and when a new Romantic theory of childhood was leading to interest in child development and learning stages, many schools began to include in their curricula, beginning in the earliest grades, original compositions based on the practical concerns of students’ lives. By that time, criticism of learning by rote and of adult texts that were remarked for children was common. After the Civil War especially, dictation and drill became less common; original compositions based on personal topics became more so. By that time, growing interest in European educational reformers such as Johann Pestalozzi (as well as his antecedents, such as John Comenius, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau) reinforced this view of learning by doing, of moving from object or event to abstraction. To illustrate this developing emphasis, Schultz concentrates on *First Books of composition*, especially those written from 1838 to 1855 and used in the common schools where, without a straight route to college, reform pedagogies could flourish. These books—including Charles Morley’s *A Practical Guide to Composition* (1838), John Frost’s *Easy Exercises in Composition* (1839), Charles Northend’s *Young Composer* (1848), and Amos R. Phippen’s *Illustrated Composition Book* (1854)—typically began with writing rather than with rule study and used the students’ own experience as subject matter. John Frost, for example, encouraged students to write about farmers and carpenters, local fairs and cattle shows, homework and school day, family and home. These authors also commonly included illustrations—of homes, birds, outings, schoolrooms—meant to stimulate thought and writing. Such visual prompts reinforced accepted social values. A scene
showing slaves working in cotton fields, for example, asked children to write on the process of growing and harvesting cotton; it did not ask them to consider the lives of those slaves. Another picture showed a poor family ruined by demon rum. Students—clearly envisioned as middle and upper class in the texts’ many scenes of holidays, pets, and well-stocked desks—were asked “to imagine” the inside of this poor family’s home and the mistakes that had caused their fate. However, even with these cultural limitations, the pictures and the questions that accompanied them—concerning what was happening, why, and how it should be judged—stressed that all writers must observe the world around them and analyze what they see. In these books, as well as in teachers’ manuals, the authors suggest that class discussions, informal writing, and group activities can help students move from experience to abstractions, and from original thinking to original writing.

From textbooks and manuals, Schultz moves to student writing to examine the tendency toward regular assignments on personal subjects. In 1857 at the Albany Female Academy, for example, exercises in oral and written composition began in the earliest grades, with topics moving from the concrete to the more abstract. Teachers counseled students not to aim falsely for “something fine,” not to base papers on platitudes or unexamined generalizations. At the Buffalo Female Academy, a prize-winning essay in 1862 was a first-person narrative that drew on the student’s values and community life to discuss the Civil War. Students at both boys’ and girls’ schools wrote about their own lives, and teachers rewarded the results. (This practice was perhaps more common in girls’ schools since they typically were not college preparatory schools.) Schultz also notes that by 1850 Thomas Gallaudet—who cofounded the American School for the Deaf in 1817—was advocating the use of engravings and photographs as stimuli for writing.

As Schultz enlarges our picture of the nineteenth century, she recognizes that twentieth-century reformers fought against the dominant curriculum. And she notes that not every personal or object-based assignment was necessarily preferable. Assignments that focused on “how I spent my summer vacation,” as they became institutionalized, could devolve into mere abstractions that fostered no real thought. She argues, however, that although its influence may have been limited, a creative tradition of critical thinking about experience did exist in the nineteenth century, one that asked students to engage a world larger than their own, and one from which today’s educators can learn.

At a recent meeting of writing program administrators, I had Schultz’s
book with me in order to study it between sessions. When a colleague saw it, she told me that a reviewer had suggested that she use it to historicize her own study of the personal writing assignments that are used today. *The Young Composers*, which Schultz herself labels as “our profession’s first history of school-based writing instruction,” is a groundbreaking text that reveals the true creativity of writing teachers, the innovations in the lower schools, and the complex origins of many teaching methods. In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida notes the difficulty of reclaiming the past: “classical and extraordinary works move away from us at great speed, in a continually accelerated fashion. They burrow into the past at a distance more and more comparable to that which separates us from archaeological digs.” Through her careful research, Schultz has helped to slow down that process as it pertains to writing instruction and has introduced a more nuanced vision of our past, one that should enrich our teaching practices.


Reviewed by Reed Way Dasenbrock, New Mexico State University

*After Rhetoric* is an unusual book. While the field (or fields) of rhetoric and composition have not quite settled into the postmodernist torpor that has characterized literary studies in the last decade, the field is certainly more stable and, in Kuhnian terms, less pre-paradigmatic than it was even a few years ago. This is not altogether a good thing: the health of any field depends in great measure on the supply of potential heretics, those willing to challenge the assumptions that others take for granted, even when (or especially when) those assumptions have the weight of institutions and traditions behind them.

While *After Rhetoric* doesn’t exactly constitute theses nailed on a church door, it nonetheless is a courageous attempt to challenge directly a number of central beliefs in the field today. Yarbrough’s central aim is to criticize what he calls “culturalism”—or the belief that we are divided into groups that share a culture and a language. Virtually everyone working in rhetoric and composition takes this view for granted and would not question it. In Yarbrough’s view, not only is it incorrect to