understanding of the backgrounds of African American literary writers (particularly of earlier decades) so that they may have an accurate picture of the range of their social and occupational contexts. Such accounts would also depict the various ways in which literature figured in the ambitions, goals, and aims of individual writers from different classes and social backgrounds.

The work to be done in restoring accuracy and cross-class representation of African American writers extends beyond classrooms. Scholars need to give much more attention to the range of written genres in relation to oral genres of African American authors, as well as to their readership—the people and places for whom written materials became central to interaction and action.[24] Research still has much to tell of the extent to which African American writers have deliberated the indeterminacy of the role of imaginative literature as well as their own struggle between devotion to the literary and to their tasks as writers in a world in great need of social reform.

16 *Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition*

ANNE RUGGLES GERE

> Two prisoners in contingent cells communicate by blows struck on the wall. The wall separates them, but it also permits them to communicate.
>
> –SIMONE WEIL

In a rented room on Leavenworth Street in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco a group of women gathers on Friday afternoons from two to five to provide one another advice and feedback on their writing. The Tenderloin District, identified by many as a home for drug dealers, welfare recipients, criminals, and mental health patients, also provides a home for several writing groups including the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop. Carol Heller, who has studied this group, notes that although these women have little formal education, they take their writing seriously; they offer one another encouragement as well as criticism and suggest revisions. As Carolyn, a member of the group, put it, "We can disagree with each other's views, but the point of this workshop is to do the work" (Heller, *Multiple Functions* 225).[1]

In Lansing, Iowa, a small farming community, a dozen writers gather around Richard and Dorothy Sandry's kitchen table. They meet on Monday evenings during the lull between fall harvest and spring planting and spend two hours reading and responding to one another's writing. In their prose they look at the experience of farming, old equipment, the process of milking cows, and country schools. Frequently writers talk about their plans before they begin writing, gathering suggestions and ideas for shaping their material. These writing workshops are part of what Robert Wolf, the workshop facilitator, calls the Rural Renovation Proposal, which aims to revitalize both the economy and democracy of small towns by building community and consensus among individuals who can then address local problems.

Participants in groups like the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop and the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop represent a tiny portion of the

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enormous number of individuals who meet in living rooms, nursing homes, community centers, churches, shelters for the homeless, around kitchen tables, and in rented rooms to write down their worlds. These writers bear testimony to the fact that writing development occurs outside formal education. As Simone Weil reminds us, walls can be a means of communication as well as a barrier, and I propose that we listen to the signals that come through the walls of our classrooms from the world outside.

Hobbled by poverty, histories of alcoholism and drug addiction, along with the indignities of aging, the women in the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop take strength from finding that their experience is worth expressing. As one member of the Women's Writing Workshop says, "You write down your world and then you read it to other people and they affirm you for it" (Heller, *Writers* 6). Anita Ardell, a recovering cancer patient, expresses a similar view, "I had never before written. They've encouraged me incredibly . . . You are given the freedom to try. You feel brave here. You feel brave at the women writers group" (Heller, *Multiple Functions* 174). Participants in the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop also find that writing enhances their self-esteem. Bob Leppert, a farmer with little formal education, says, "I never felt like I had anything that anyone was interested in hearing" (Wagner). Eighty-three-year-old Clara Leppert, the oldest member of the Lansing workshop, echoes this feeling, "We didn't think we could write . . . " (*Washington Post*). Despite their inexperience, workshop participants gain confidence and begin to think of themselves as writers.

In addition to increasing positive feelings, workshops outside classroom walls discipline participants to hone their craft as writers. Mary TallMountain, a member of the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop and a published author, explains, "They're my readers. I write down everything they say and at some point in time, when it's quiet and spiritually proper, when my mind and whole system are attuned to the writing, I go through it" (Heller, *Multiple Functions* 83). Maria Rand, another member of the workshop affirms this: "Some of the women are hesitant because nobody ever asked them their opinions about anything. But unless you read your work and get reactions from different groups of people, you're not a writer. You're just dilettanting around. You gotta get rejected and get applause. You gotta get both sides. I'll always be in writing groups. That's where I get my energy from" (Heller, *Multiple Functions* 91–92). The Lansing, Iowa, group also helps members develop their writing skills. A local reporter explains, "They offer positive criticism of one another's work. They read books and essays by established writers and pick the work apart, talking about the elements that make it effective" (Wagner).

Opportunities for performance provide a major incentive for writers to develop their skills. The Tenderloin Reflection and Education Center, which sponsors the Women's Writing Workshop, holds regular public readings where workshoppers present their work to a live audience. Despite the anxieties they feel at reading their writing aloud to strangers, individual members and the group as a whole enjoy the opportunity to display their work. As Heller notes, these readings strengthen the relationship between the story teller and those who hear the story, along with the larger community as a whole (Heller, *Multiple Functions* 130). The Center also helps maintain a local newsletter, *Tender Leaves,* to which workshop participants contribute regularly, and the Tenderloin's Exit Theater has produced plays written by Workshop participants. When he began working with the Lansing group, Robert Wolf explained that "public readings with discussions afterwards" would be the heart of the project (*Voices* 2). Publication also features prominently in this group's work. Several members of the workshop contributed to *Voices from the Land,* a book that has attracted national attention. Bill Welsh, one of these contributors, observes, "I never dreamed of this. I don't feel like any kind of a big shot. I still wear my overalls" (*Washington Post*).

Reaching out into the community with prose performances develops in participants the perception that writing can effect changes in their lives. The stated purpose of the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop—to build community in order to solve local problems—is enacted by individual members (Wolf, *Newsletter*). Greg Welsh, a member of the workshop, employed writing to deal with the time when his family's cattle herd was accidentally poisoned by a contaminated bale of hay. Greg explains, "Writing about it was one way for me to understand how I felt. It was a way for me to reconcile some differences I had with members of my family" (Wagner). In addition to changing the quality of personal relationships, workshop participants often use writing to alter the material conditions of their lives. A piece by one of the Tenderloin women writers led to a fundraising event for a publication called *Homeless Link* along with increased activism on behalf of homeless people, and a Black History study group developed because of another participant's play, "Ain't I Right Too?" (Heller, *Multiple Functions* 216). The public readings of the Lansing group have led individuals to consider organic alternatives to chemical farming (Wagner).

Positive feelings about oneself and one's writing, motivation to revise and improve composition skills, opportunities for publication of various sorts, the belief that writing can make a difference in individual and community life—these accomplishments of workshops outside classroom walls mirror the goals most of us composition teachers espouse for our students. Workshops outside classroom walls frequently, however, succeed with those individuals deemed unsuccessful by their composition instructors. Few of the participants in the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop or the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop had much formal education, and many had negative experiences with schooling. They did not think of themselves as writers because teachers had taught them they could not write. Yet these individuals wrote effectively in workshops, published their writing, and gained personal and community recognition for their work. Although it remains largely invisible and inaudible to us, writing development occurs regularly and successfully outside classroom walls.

One explanation for our relative unfamiliarity with groups such as those in Lansing and the Tenderloin lies in the way we tell our history. Like repre-

sentatives of most emerging fields, we in composition studies have sought to establish our right to a place in the academy by recounting our past, and this historiography has focused inside classroom walls. One version of composition's history has concentrated on American instructional practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Albert Kitzhaber's study of rhetoric in nineteenth-century American colleges helped establish this tradition. Drawing upon nineteenth-century textbooks, Kitzhaber describes the theory and practice of composition in higher education during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Historians such as Donald Stewart, Robert Connors, and James Berlin, even though they adopt differing stances toward their materials, emulate Kitzhaber's model in looking to composition texts, course descriptions, statements of instructions, and other institutional artifacts as sources for information about composition theory and practice. A related historical narrative constructs for composition a genealogy that extends back to Classical Rhetoric. Scholars such as James Murphy, Edward P. J. Corbett, and Winifred Bryan Homer have aided this construction by delineating the composition-rhetoric connections. Robert Connors, Lisa Ede, and Andrea Lunsford extol the benefits of this union, asserting that until recently "rhetorical scholars in speech communication emphasized theoretical and historical studies, while those in composition focused on pedagogy," but the wedding of rhetoric and composition has provided the former with an "outlet for application" and relieved the latter of its "historical and theoretical vacuum" (12–13). In addition, they claim, this merger has helped "to make composition and its necessary theoretical background in rhetoric acceptable to departments of English" (13).

While we might debate how acceptable composition has become in English departments, the terms in which composition's history has been represented arouse little dissent: In concentrating upon establishing our position within the academy, we have neglected to recount the history of composition in other contexts; we have neglected composition's extracurriculum. I borrow this term "extracurriculum" from Frederick Rudolph, who uses it to describe the literary clubs, the fraternity system, and the organized athletics instigated by undergraduates during the nineteenth century. Rudolph argues that this extracurriculum served to make undergraduates "a remarkably important element in the power structure of the American college" (136). Arthur Applebee also uses the term "extracurricular," but for him it describes one of three traditions—the ethical, the classical, and the extracurriculum—from which English studies emerged. Applebee defines the extracurriculum as the nonacademic tradition that contributed to the development of English studies. Like Rudolph, he employs the term extracurriculum to describe eighteenth- and nineteenth-century college literary clubs and recounts how these groups discussed vernacular literature not judged worthy of academic study. As Applebee explains, college literary clubs also sponsored libraries, speakers, and magazines, providing a context where students could "polish their skills in English composition" (12). Applebee's extracurriculum does not include fraternities or athletic groups but it confirms Rudolph's point that the extracurriculum lent undergraduates power in American colleges because the curriculum was adapted to their interests. Gerald Graff emulates Applebee's description of extracurricular literary clubs, noting their contribution to the development of English studies.

Significantly, Rudolph, Applebee, and Graff all describe the extracurriculum as a white male enterprise. Literary societies at women's colleges and women's literary groups on co-ed campuses receive no more attention than do those of African Americans. In addition, each of these narratives positions the extracurriculum as a way-station on the route toward a fully professionalized academic department, thereby implying that the extracurriculum withered away after helping to institutionalize English studies. There is no suggestion that the extracurriculum continues to exist or perform cultural work. This erasure of the extraprofessional takes on particular irony in Graff's work as his discourse advances the very professionalism he decries. As Jonathan Freedman puts it, "The effacement or replacement of the nonacademic perspective by a thoroughly academicized one that professionalism accomplished is recapitulated in the narrative form in which the story of professionalism is told."

In contrast, my version of the extracurriculum includes the present as well as the past; it extends beyond the academy to encompass the multiple contexts in which persons seek to improve their own writing; it includes more diversity in gender, race, and class among writers; and it avoids, as much as possible, a reenactment of professionalization in its narrative. . . .

My methodology for looking at composition's extracurriculum owes much to recent accounts of literacy practices outside formal education. Investigations of community literacy practices by Shirley Brice Heath, of workplace literacy by Glynda Hull, of multiple-discourse communities by Patricia Bizzell, and of "unofficial literacy" by Ruth Hubbard all provide angles of vision for looking at composition's extracurriculum. They suggest the need to uncouple composition and schooling, to consider the situatedness of composition practices, to focus on the experiences of writers not always visible to us inside the walls of the academy. Drawing on this tradition, my account focuses explicitly on self-sponsored pedagogically oriented writing activities outside the academy. In defining the extracurriculum this way, I deliberately exclude from my story the writing instruction carried out in workplaces, extension courses, and workshops for which participants pay large fees. The extracurriculum I examine is constructed by desire, by the aspirations and imaginations of its participants. It posits writing as an action undertaken by motivated individuals who frequently see it as having social and economic consequences, including transformations in personal relationships and farming practices.

Just as accounts of literacy practices outside the walls of the academy uncouple literacy and schooling, so my account of the extracurriculum of composition separates pedagogy from the traditional pedagogue. Composition's extracurriculum acknowledges a wide range of teachers, including texts published for aspiring writers. From the colonial period to the present, publica-

tions designed for persons who seek to improve their writing have contributed to composition's extracurriculum. One of the most popular, George Fisher's *The American Instructor: Or, Young Man's Best Companion* was first published in Philadelphia in 1748, and issued in seventeen editions between 1748 and 1833. Aimed at the emerging entrepreneurs of the period, Fisher's book emphasized the importance of composition for business and asserted: "To write a good fair, free and commendable hand, is equally necessary in most if not all the affairs of life and occurrences of business" (A2). Fisher goes on to offer sentences to copy, models of letters for various occasions as well as instructions for making a quill pen, holding the pen in the hand, positioning the light, and making red and black ink. He also includes directions for keeping ink from freezing or molding: "In hard frosty Weather, Ink will be apt to freeze; which if once it doth, it will be good for nothing; for it takes away all its Blackness and Beauty. To prevent which (if you have not the Convenience of keeping it warm, or from the Cold) put a few Drops of Brandy, or other Spirits, into it, and it will not freeze. And to hinder its Moulding, put a little Salt therein" (43). This form of composition's extracurriculum continued after the Revolutionary War with publications such as *The Complete Letter Writer* (1793), *The Farmer and Mechanic's Pocket Assistant* (1818), and *The Art of Epistolary Composition* (1826).[2]

Not only did publications like these offer an alternative to the academy's instruction in composition, they frequently criticized the way composition was taught in schools. *A Help to Young Writers,* a self-help guide published in 1836, found fault with the "vapid subjects" assigned by teachers and with the tendency of schools to teach composition as though it bore no relationship to good conversation. This self-help guide went on to assert that "composition is nothing more than conversation put on paper" and demonstrated this by advising writers in question-and-answer form (Heath 34).

As magazines developed during the nineteenth century, composition's extracurriculum flourished in their pages as well. As Nicole Tonkovich Hoffman has shown, Sarah Hale, editor of *Godey's Ladies Magazine* from 1828–1878, offered considerable advice to writers. Like the authors of self-help books, Hale includes material on the technology of writing. Instructions for cutting a pen-point and models of handwriting appear in the pages of *Godey's.* Hale also gives attention to the process of writing. An 1838 column, for example, recommends what Hale calls "mental composition" for developing more active reading. According to Hale, mental composition "can be pursued at any time and place without the requisite paraphernalia of written composition. . . . it greatly conduces to the development of the judgment, to make frequent pauses, and trace out the inference, and the particular bearing and tendency of detached portions of it; and upon its completion to consider the general scope, its moral tone, the correctness of the sentiments advanced and the character of the style" (191). Hale goes on to recommend writing in response to reading, not note-taking but "the keeping of a common-place book, to sketch down one's views, opinions, and sentiments, upon every subject or topic, which may have interested the mind in the perusal of a work" (191).

Godey's was not the only magazine to include advice for individuals interested in developing their composition skills, but it was the most influential women's magazine until the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when it was supplanted by the more consumer-oriented *The Ladies Home Journal.* Although less didactic than *Godey's, The Ladies Home Journal* continued composition's extracurriculum. Editor Edward Bok's column in an 1890 issue of *The Ladies Home Journal,* for example, included admonitions to aspiring authors such as, "Whenever possible use the typewriter. If you have not a machine yourself, send your manuscript to some typewriting establishment and let it be copied. The expense is trifling, but the value to a manuscript can hardly be overestimated . . . Avoid corrections, erasures and interlineations. Don't do on paper what you ought to do mentally. Again—and on this point I cannot be too emphatic—do not roll your manuscript. If there is one thing more than any other which irritates a busy, practical editor, it is a rolled manuscript" (12). An 1894 column by J. MacDonald Oxley includes directives for a "Mutual Research Club" whose "essential feature is the preparation of papers on given subjects and the rule is that each member should have a paper ready for every meeting." Oxley continues, "The modus operandi is as follows: A subject having been selected, and a night of meeting decided upon, the members proceed to prepare their papers. These, at least ten days before the meeting, are sent in to the secretary who binds them together, adding several blank pages at the back. They are then circulated among the members, who pass them on from one to the other, having first entered any note or comment that may suggest itself on the blank pages provided for the purpose. Then at the night of the meeting each member reads his or her paper, and the reading concluded, a general discussion takes place" (16).

Although we can never know precisely how these publications of composition's extracurriculum were used, their number, multiple editions, and wide circulation document that they WERE used. We can speculate that at least some of them played a role in the many self-help groups that also constituted composition's extracurriculum. The egalitarian view of knowledge that characterized European settlers who arrived on this continent led them to organize for self-improvement. Cotton Mather started a self-help group in Boston during the colonial period and in 1728, Ben Franklin joined with several friends to form a mutual improvement group that required each member to "once in three months produce and read an essay of his own writing on any subject he pleased" (Goodman 98). As the new republic took shape, many young men formed self-improvement groups. In Boston in 1833, for example, more than 1500 young men belonged to groups that gave composition a central place in their activities. Individuals wrote reports on local issues and these reports were read and discussed at meetings. The Lyceum, founded in 1826, had 3000 clubs in fifteen states by 1836, and fostered self-improvement through writing, as did the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific

Circle (CLSC), founded in 1878. This 1904 letter from a CLSC member in Syracuse, New York, demonstrates the extracurriculum of composition in action:

> The members are expected to write two papers upon subjects assigned to them by the president who selects carefully such as pertain strictly upon the year's study. This part of the program is thoroughly enjoyed as a special effort is put forth by each member to put only such thoughts upon paper which may prove helpful. An able critic from whose valuable assistance much benefit has been derived is usually in attendance unless professional duties demand her absence. (CLSC, 1904 Record Book)

Many self-help groups included a critic among the officers. Usually elected on the basis of skill in identifying errors, this critic assumed special responsibility for noting faults of syntax and diction in papers read before the group. The critic's commentary, combined with the general club discussion, provided members significant guidance for improving their prose. The Bay View Circles, an offshoot of Chautauqua, also followed an annual course of study which included writing papers on topics under discussion. In 1897, the *Bay View Magazine,* which published the curriculum for the Circles, included this reminder: "Work has a two-fold purpose: The first is to share with the circle the results of research; the other is the benefit the member receives in knowledge and in discipline of writing." It also offered this advice: "In preparing papers, never be content to give dry and detailed facts, but invest the subject with your own individuality" (7).

Spurned by many of these groups, middle-class African Americans formed self-help associations of their own early in the nineteenth century. Typical of these, the New York Garrison Society, founded in 1834, concentrated its discussions on education and liberty and devoted its meetings to "singing, praying and the reading of original compositions" (Porter 568). Other African American expressions of composition's extracurriculum included the Philadelphia Association for Moral and Mental Improvement of the People of Color, The Young Men's Literary and Moral Reform Society of Pittsburgh and Vicinity, the New York African Clarkson Society, the Washington Convention Society, the Young Men's Lyceum and Debating Society of Detroit, and the Boston Philomathean Society. Many of these groups included both men and women, but African American women led the way in organizing single-sex forms of composition's extracurriculum by establishing ladies literary societies in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., New York, Boston, Buffalo, and Rochester before 1836. William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator,* addressed the Female and Literary Society of Philadelphia in 1832. When members of this society entered the meeting room, they placed their anonymous weekly compositions in a box from which they were later retrieved and criticized. Garrison was so impressed with the writing produced by the Female and Literary Society that he subsequently published several selections in *The Liberator,* thus instituting a tradition of African American clubwomen publishing their work.

Faced with the double challenge posed by their race and gender, African American clubwomen embraced writing's capacity to effect social and economic change, to enact their motto, "lifting as we climb." The Woman's Era Club, founded in Boston by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin in the latter part of the nineteenth century, issued a newspaper *The Woman's Era* in which clubwomen published their writing, and African American women appeared frequently in the pages of *The Liberator* as well as *The Guardian, The Conservator,* and *Voice of the Negro.* Prior to the Civil War, African Americans living in the south created another kind of extracurriculum in the form of secret schools. These schools—comprised of one person who could read and write and a group of individuals who wanted to learn—would meet during the night or on Sundays when slaves had a bit of free time. The mandate for graduates of these secret schools was to teach others. Kept secret because the punishment for trying to learn to read and write was severe beating or even death, these schools enabled a number of graduates to write their own passes to freedom. As Thomas Holt puts it, "Just as blacks maintained an invisible church, separate from the one that whites provided for them, they also maintained secret schools. These schools could be found in every major southern city and in countless rural communities and plantations. Their teachers were often barely literate themselves, but they passed on what little they knew to others in what one may call a chain letter of instruction" (94).

White women also contributed to composition's extracurriculum. Between 1839 and 1844, Margaret Fuller offered well-educated women subscription memberships to conversations designed to provide women an opportunity to reproduce their learning as men did, and although talk was the dominant mode, Fuller required participants to write. She explained: "At the next meeting I read these [writings] aloud and canvassed their adequacy without mentioning the names of the writers" (Hoffman 299). Clearly Fuller saw writing as a means of fostering thinking and she encouraged women to write as part of their self-education. For example, she advised one woman this way:

> I should think writing would be very good for you. A journal of your thoughts and analyses of your thoughts would teach you how to generalize and give firmness to your conclusions. Do not write down merely your impressions that things are beautiful or the reverse, but what they are and why they are. (Hoffman 302)

White women's clubs wielded considerable cultural force during the period between 1880 and 1920, and most clubs required members to write papers. The Saturday Morning Club of Boston, for example, stipulated in its bylaws: "Papers shall be read to the president (or to someone designated by her) at least a week before the discussion date" (SMC Yearbook). Since newer members wrote a higher percentage of the papers, this system of supervision

guaranteed that less experienced writers received more direct instruction in this form of the extracurriculum. Elizabeth Moore et al.'s *English Composition for College Women* (1914) demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of club papers during this period by including a chapter on the club paper. In addition to sample papers and suggestions for topics, the chapter includes this description: "A club paper may be considered a popular exposition of some subject of general utility or interest" (67).

The extracurriculum of composition reached across class lines. One account of a working-class women's club appears in Lucy Larcom's *A New England Girlhood.* Larcom, who worked in the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, describes "The Improvement Circle" in which she and her co-workers met "for writing and discussion" (174). Papers read in the Improvement Circle were often published in "The Lowell Offering," a journal edited by a young woman who worked in the mills. Other forms of composition's extracurriculum appeared in the clubs organized in Settlements—such as Jane Addams's Hull House in Chicago; the Philadelphia Guild of Working Women, founded in 1893; and the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, founded in 1877. In these and other such associations, working-class women wrote their worlds and helped one another become better writers.

This brief account documents some of the publications and groups that sustained the extracurriculum of composition in the past. Current publications such as William Zinsser's *Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing* and magazines such as *The Writer's Market* have taken the place of *The Young Man's Companion* and columns in *Godey's Ladies Magazine,* but today's writers continue to separate pedagogy from the classroom pedagogue and seek advice from texts in the extracurriculum. The Garrison Society's "singing, praying, and reading of original compositions" and Margaret Fuller's conversational advice to women writers may be silenced, but groups such as the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop and the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop have taken up their task of bringing together individuals of varying classes, genders, and races who meet to read and respond to one another's writing. These ongoing and vital manifestations of the extracurriculum challenge us to take a wider view of composition. In suggesting a more inclusive perspective, I am not advocating that composition studies work to appropriate the extracurriculum or tear down classroom walls. Rather, I propose that we avoid an uncritical narrative of professionalization and acknowledge the extracurriculum as a legitimate and autonomous cultural formation that undertakes its own projects. Such an inclusive perspective can lead us to tap and listen to messages through the walls, to consider how we can learn from and contribute to composition's extracurriculum in our classes.

That word *class* suggests possibilities, since it designates at once a political/economic social group and the site where we in composition studies enact much of our working lives. Normal usage separates social class from academic class, but a look at the origins of the word suggests a close relationship between the two. The Latin word *Classis* referred to the most prosperous Roman citizens, the ones who paid the highest taxes. In the second century Aulus Gellius used the name of these wealthy citizens to designate the best writers. As Richard Terdiman says, "This subterranean valorization of *economic power masquerading as quality* has stuck to 'class' ever since" (226). If we look at the relationships between economic power and attributions of quality in our writing classes, we cannot avoid noting that those with least economic power, often people of color, are most likely to be designated as "basic writer." Significantly, writing centers, which lie outside classes yet remain intimately related to them, offer rich opportunities for communicating with worlds outside the academy. Students often bring extracurricular texts such as self-sponsored poems, resumes, and personal letters to these liminal sites. By stepping outside our classes in both economic and academic terms, we can contribute to and learn from the extracurriculum as we reconsider relationships between economic power and attributions of quality in the writing of our student bodies.

The term *student body* suggests potential for creating another bond through the walls separating the classroom and the extracurriculum. Schooling implies a disciplining of the student's body. Nineteenth-century images of classrooms with the instructor standing on a raised dais over students seated in desks bolted to the floor, of teachers caning students' bodies, and of students standing to recite have given way to the more familiar images of instructors seated near students, of moveable desks arranged in a semi-circle, and of students' fingers poised over a keyboard. But schooling in general and composition in particular still inscribes itself on students' bodies. The relaxed physical environment of the extracurriculum suggests that we rethink the relationship between physical and mental discipline. Why, for example, has the move toward whole language pedagogies among our colleagues in elementary schools been accompanied by the introduction of cushions, beanbag chairs, and carpets in classrooms? How do we see the correlation between whole language—a pedagogy that unites reading and writing while affirming students' inherent language abilities—and a blurring of domestic and academic scenes? This blurring suggests new ways of looking at the relation of public and private life, even of eliding distinctions between the two. It also recalls the material conditions of writing. While few of us are concerned with providing our students recipes for making red ink or instructing them in ways to prevent it from molding or freezing, we do confront such complex material questions as how to provide equality of access to computers for word processing. Reconsidering the relations between domestic and classroom economies may help us develop creative responses to the material constraints of writing. Thinking along these lines we would do well to recall Kenneth Burke's image of intellectual history as a parlor where participants enter and leave the ongoing conversation. This domestic/academic image resonates with feminist explorations of the trajectories of public and private.

In urging that we look again at the relationship between domestic and academic scenes, I am emphatically not suggesting that we move away from professionalism in our field. We know too well the history of the Harvard

Reports issued at the turn of the century. These reports, which had an enormously negative impact on composition studies, demonstrate what can happen when questions about composition are answered by non-professionals: The most superficial aspects of writing receive the greatest attention, and the more complicated and important questions remain unasked and unanswered. We who teach composition, and particularly we who claim membership in CCCC, have, in recent years, given considerable energy to professionalism. We have asserted that writing instructors have or require specialized training and that they deserve the respectability born of educated knowledge. I applaud these efforts, particularly where they have served to improve the working conditions of writing teachers. But I'd like to suggest that we scrutinize the culture of professionalism. For instance, professionalism incorporates both material and ideological functions. Its economic function creates a link between education and the marketplace by insisting, for example, that composition teachers ought to be paid adequately because they possess special training. Embracing this economic function implicates us in an ideology that justifies inequality of status and closure of access. Composition's extracurriculum can remind us of the need for increased access in writing instruction. In response we can strengthen our vigilance against reductive forms of assessment and against instructional practices and curricular plans that make writing a barrier to be overcome rather than an activity to be engaged in. We can also learn to value the amateur. The culture of professionalism, with its emphasis on specialization, abhors amateurism, but composition's extracurriculum shows the importance of learning from amateurs. After all, as the Latin root *amatus* reminds us, members of the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop or the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop write for *love*.

An unswerving concentration on professionalism can also blind us to the power relations in our classrooms. One of the clearest messages of the extracurriculum concerns *power*. As Frederick Rudolph noted, the extracurriculum of the nineteenth century vested students with power in curriculum decisions. We see that power acknowledged (and usurped) today as student film societies become departments of and courses in film studies. In a related way composition studies can draw upon and contribute to circulations of power in its extracurriculum. Our incorporation of the workshop practices that originated in student literary societies exemplifies one way. Another is suggested by a sketch Mary TallMountain read at the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop. This sketch portrays a fellow Indian who loses his identity and ultimately his life in San Francisco:

> I watched that man for six months in the line at St. Anthony's shelter. I watched him and watched him and watched him. I could see beyond the dirt and all the things holding him back. He was a brave man to me. I felt he had come to the end of his way. The next thing he knew he was riding through the prairies on his horse. And the filthy streets changed into the long grass in a strangely familiar valley and Bilijohn was riding. Riding. He didn't hear the high keening screech of brakes, didn't see the lithe swerve of the shining town car. He heard only a distant call: Bily! Bily John! and his own answering holler. Yeah, I'm coming as fast as I can! He didn't feel the massy jolt as the sharp hood scooped him skyward, his eyes still measuring the weeping clouds. The half-empty, gray-green bottle arced into the gutter and tumbled down the torrent of flotsam, the Thunderbird belching out of it. Indian Bilijohn galloped on through the long amber grass, heels pummeling the bright flanks. (Heller, "Writers" 77–78)

Mary TallMountain demonstrates the power of representing one's own community. In insisting on Bilijohn's dignity and humanity against mainstream accounts of poverty and alcoholism among Native Americans, she exemplifies the point made by a good deal of fashionable critical discourse: the importance of considering who will represent whom in what terms and in what language. Like medical doctors who learn from nutritionists, shamans, and artists without compromising their professional status, we can benefit from examining how the extracurriculum confers authority for representation and how we might extend that authority in our classes. Our students would benefit if we learned to see them as individuals who seek to write, not be written about, who seek to publish, not be published about, who seek to theorize, not be theorized about. Ultimately, however, we in composition studies would benefit from this shift because, as Susan Miller reminds us, "placing those who teach composition in the role of hired mother/maid has a great deal to do with the presexual, preeconomic, prepolitical subjectivity imposed on composition *students*" (192). By helping to change the subjectivities of our students, we open the possibility of enhancing our own (professional) positions.

The fact that sketches like Mary TallMountain's are read regularly at the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop speaks to the issue of *performance* in the extracurriculum. Here, as Maria Rand says, "You gotta get rejected and get applause." Clubs that mandated oral readings of papers, the office of the critic who commented on syntax and diction in self-help groups, the presumption of the editor of *The Ladies Home Journal* that writers would be sending their manuscripts, rolled or not, to busy editors—all of these items from the history of composition's extracurriculum show the direct relationship between writing and performance. Like the British working-class balladeer of the mid-nineteenth century who exchanged original compositions for a pint of ale, writers in the extracurriculum demonstrate how writing effects changes, both tangible and intangible. Thinking of writing as performance reminds us that it occupies an uncertain space between the concrete and the symbolic. This might prompt us to reconsider performance in our own teaching and research. As Porter Perrin shows, college composition before 1750 in this country centered on the declamation, a pedagogical practice which required students to read aloud to an audience compositions they had previously written. Pedagogies of performance like these reinforce writing's liminal status between materiality and idea and demonstrate it as "a centered space from which we do not exit in the same form" (Benston 435).

The transformative quality of writing's performance speaks to the cultural work it accomplishes. Within classroom walls, composition frequently serves a gatekeeping function by providing an initiation rite that determines whether newcomers can master the practices and perspectives of academic discourse. Those who do not succeed in composition classes rarely last long in higher education. For a significant number of those who survive this initiation, alienation results. These are students who succeed in composition by distancing themselves from persons and experiences important in their everyday lives. Composition thus accomplishes the cultural work of producing autonomous individuals willing to adopt the language and perspectives of others. Composition's extracurriculum frequently serves the opposite function by strengthening ties with the community. In his study of the development of schooled literacy among the British working class of the nineteenth century, David Vincent observes that, "Composition was eventually admitted to the official curriculum in 1871, but as a means of exploiting the Penny Post, not of imitating penny dreadfuls" (218). Penny dreadfuls, episodic narratives that rely strongly on the songs and melodramatic tales common among working-class people, were held in low regard by school instructors who saw composition as a means of copying the sentences of others. Yet, as Vincent shows, working-class children educated in these schools were as likely to use their skills to write penny dreadfuls as letters for the penny post. Similarly, when our own students enter the extracurriculum, they frequently write their own versions of penny dreadfuls. That is, the form and content of what they write reflects their connections with their own communities. For women of the nineteenth century the genre of club paper represented one such connection, and the extracurricular selections that students bring to our writing centers manifest another. When persons in groups such as the Tenderloin Women's Writing Workshop and the Lansing, Iowa, Writers' Workshop write about people they know, about homeless, about farming, composition's extracurriculum accomplishes the cultural work of affirming and strengthening their connections with their own communities.

These communities outside our classroom walls have, if books on the best-seller list in recent years provide any indication, demonstrated considerable dissatisfaction with much of what transpires in higher education. While one reasonable response is to counter with books telling the story from our side of the classroom wall, we run the risk of talking past those on the other side, of constructing walls as divisions rather than means of communicating. A more productive alternative involves considering our own roles as agents within the culture that encompasses the communities on both sides of the classroom wall.

This consideration implies rethinking the narratives we construct about composition studies. Instead of a historiography based exclusively on textbooks used in schools and colleges, on the careers and works of prominent teachers and scholars, on the curricular decisions made by universities and on texts produced by students, we can consider the various sites in which the extracurriculum has been enacted, the local circumstances that supported its developments, the material artifacts employed by its practitioners, and the cultural work it accomplished. This expanded historical account will attend to the New York Garrison Club along with Porter Perrin's discussion of the teaching of rhetoric in the American college before 1750. It will recognize that a group of unschooled young men who met on Friday evenings to share and respond to one another's writing contributes to the story of composition as surely as does an examination of textbooks written by Fred Newton Scott. It will look to *Godey's Magazine* as well as Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle Lettres* for information on how writers of another age learned their craft.

While history offers a source of inspiration for the future, its vision cannot be realized without cultural work in the present. As we consider our own roles of social agency we can insist more firmly on the democracy of writing and the need to enact pedagogies that permit connections and communication with the communities outside classroom walls. This does not mean appropriating the extracurriculum but merely assigning it a more prominent status in our discourses. Whether or not we rise to this challenge, composition's extracurriculum will persist and our students can join it as soon as they step outside our classroom walls and enter what Tillie Olsen calls "all the life that happens outside of us, beyond us." We may discipline their bodies with school desks and hand positions for keyboarding, but they write outside and beyond us in an extracurriculum of their own making. They may gather in rented rooms in the Tenderloin, around kitchen tables in Lansing, Iowa, or in a myriad of other places to write their worlds. The question remains whether we will use classroom walls as instruments of separation or communication.