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Reviews

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REVIEWS

Luce-Kapler, Rebecca. *Writing With, Through, and Beyond the Text: An Ecology of Language*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004.

Kabi Hartman, Franklin and Marshall College

To “write otherwise” is the desire reverberating at the core of Rebecca Luce-Kapler’s *Writing With, Through, and Beyond the Text*, and indeed Luce-Kapler “writes otherwise” as she explores writing’s capacity to “connect us to our lived experiences and reveal the depths of those experiences” (xiii). Towards the end of re-visioning the writing process—and, by extension, ourselves—Luce-Kapler draws upon the idea that “writing is an ecology” (xii-xiii). Here Luce-Kapler suggests that we investigate writers and their writings in relation to a myriad of systems: “ideas, purposes, interpersonal interactions, cultural norms and textual forms” (xiii). Luce-Kapler has adopted this idea in her own writing and teaching practice with exciting and sometimes challenging results for those of us also eager to write—and teach—otherwise.

Luce-Kapler suggests that to “write otherwise” is to be alert to “the locations and situations in which we write, especially ones that link us to the non-human world” (xiii). Modeling a deep responsiveness to her environment, particularly to nature, Luce-Kapler inscribes her self-reflexive awareness into her text. Thus readers learn that she writes her preface from a new house on a December morning with a frozen lake clearly in view (whereas I am writing at the local Borders café on my creaky laptop nicknamed “Old Pokey,” looking out at a parking lot on an unseasonably warm April day). Luce-Kapler further requires that writers pay attention to the rhythms of the natural world unfolding around them as they write. She hears birds, whereas I am dimly aware of the drone of the magnificent steel refrigerator at the back of the café and the creaks and rustles of patrons reading their books and newspapers. And yes, disturbing thoughts play at the edge of my mind—by the time I revise this, I won’t be sitting at Borders anymore, and, even more alarming, *this won’t be a book review at all!*—for I have (as Luce-Kapler does) a long history of education and am accustomed to writing in a more traditional mode. What do we gain from knowing that Luce-Kapler gazes at a frozen lake as she writes? How will our thinking and writing change if we break old molds? These are some of the challenging questions that Luce-Kapler considers, although she does not investigate them explicitly.

Now that I am aware of the drone—or is it a whirl?—of the refrigerator and the jumping jazz on the café’s sound system, I am in the right frame of mind to consider Luce-Kapler’s second chapter, “A Coherence of Being,” which explores “rhythm and its relationship to writing” (29). Luce-Kapler’s assertion that, through our attention to rhythm, we feel “the embodied character of writing” (29) invites us to think about writing otherwise. Here Luce-Kapler discusses her poem “The Milky Way” in which she attempts to capture the rhythm of her mother’s narratives, bodily presence, and comfort (32-33). Referring to Dennis Lee’s 1998 “Body Music,” Luce-Kapler recalls how writing the poem involved her “in the very heart-beat of remembering experiences and the cadence of existence where rhythm becomes an interpretation, a way of ‘reading’ the world” (34). Any writer who

has written to the urgent beat in his or her mind will understand how this is true, yet Luce-Kapler's formulation renders us more conscious of rhythm's hermeneutic function in writing.

Luce-Kapler further maintains that the very act of digesting another writer's words and responding to them in words of our own is rhythmic. She advocates assimilating this rhythm into our writing, so that one of the exercises she might have asked me to undertake in preparation for writing this book review would be to respond in my own words to some of her poems and passages, thus creating a rhythm of reading and response which would ideally work its music into my piece. This idea—again a simple one for writers—has led Luce-Kapler to a reinterpretation of what we mean by scholarship. In a series of projects she embarked on, she responded to the aesthetic practices of artists Emily Carr and Kate Chopin, attempting to enter the rhythms of these women's artistic lives through their diaries and more formal writings and paintings. Luce-Kapler's subsequent poems about Carr and Chopin, in which she works their rhythms into her own responsive art, are dynamic, effective works of literary criticism, which push the proverbial envelope about what we define as academic writing.

Thus Luce-Kapler acknowledges that we introduce new rhythms into our writing when we consciously invite them in, as she did when she brought excerpts from Jeanette Winterson's essay, "The Semiotics of Sex," to a writing workshop she was conducting with teenage girls and asked them to write about "the forbidden" (37). Luce-Kapler points out that engaging with new rhythmic structures, as well as with some of the provoking questions posed by Winterson's text, opened up new possibilities for the girls in both their writing and their lives. As most writing teachers know, bringing new texts and rhythms into a classroom and asking students to respond to or imitate them almost always produces exciting writing, but Luce-Kapler advances the discussion by maintaining that new rhythms not only produce new writing but also generate a new sense of self on the part of the writer as she sees the world anew (29-30). Thus "our subjectivity cannot be shaped only through individual reflection, but rather, is a process of coming-to-be in relation to others"—in this case in relation to the rhythms as well as the stories of others (44). Luce-Kapler accordingly champions the writing workshop as a place where people's lives change through their writing.

Luce-Kapler also endorses writing as a place to re-shape subjectivity in her chapter, "The Subjunctive Cottage," where she explores creating "a subjunctive space" in writing (81). Here she investigates a number of ways in which writing is a "site of possibility" (103) or an *as if* space in which we might imagine different futures for ourselves (88, 102). This chapter collates the ideas of numerous writers and scholars, including Carol Shields (who coined the phrase "subjunctive cottage"), Toni Morrison, Ted Hughes, Julia Kristeva, Wolfgang Iser, Mikhail Bakhtin, Rita Felski, and Luce Irigaray, demonstrating how they address the notion that different forms of writing create different possibilities. To take only one example, Luce-Kapler cites Bakhtin's argument that "different genres define a field of possibilities" (91). However, despite her stimulating forays into literary theory, Luce-Kapler invariably returns to the idea of writing as personal growth. We are thus assured that "[w]riting is a site of possibility where we can learn things about ourselves, where we imagine different choices, and where we reconfigure our experience" (103). In a touchstone story that appears several times throughout the book, we are told about Carmen, an older woman in one of

Luce-Kapler's writing groups, whose writing ultimately led her to leave a marriage that was unfulfilling and abusive. Thus "writing otherwise" leads to living otherwise.

Additionally, it is clear that writing otherwise must lead to reading otherwise, and Luce-Kapler tacitly demands that her readers adopt this practice. There is a lack of linear narrative or argument to *Writing With, Through, and Beyond the Text* that might frustrate some readers. Rather Luce-Kapler's text demonstrates her writing praxis, being itself an "ecology" in which a myriad of systems comes into relationship. Thus autobiography bumps up against poetry, which jostles with literary theory, which in turn is put into relationship with the essay form, which then is peppered with a subtle kind of feminism, and so on. If anything, Luce-Kapler's writing is circular, as she returns to various themes, developing them in new contexts.

I, not quite comfortable with the indeterminate nature of the "otherwise" in "writing otherwise," wish to define "otherwise" here as referring to genre. Therefore, if I had to boil down the argument of such a rich and varied book as this one, I would say that it is about how opening a text to generic indeterminacy ultimately transforms both writing and subjectivity. Although this is not a new idea—writers have always yearned to change meaning by experimenting with form—Luce-Kapler has, indeed, altered the form of critical writing in ways which are significant. While I am still not sure what you, the reader, gain from knowing where I am sitting as I write, I am admittedly inspired by Luce-Kapler's book to change my own writing practice. Since I am intrigued by the possibilities for critical writing when autobiographical disclosure permeates its well-defended boundaries, I wish that Luce-Kapler had addressed this, and other theoretical questions, more directly. For now, however, I must content myself with Luce-Kapler's hope in a future perfect tense *à la* Irigaray, where writing *beyond* shapes a different future. Since I imagine that, by next week, I will have used some of Luce-Kapler's writing exercises and ideas in my own writing and classroom, I see that *Writing With, Through, and Beyond the Text* has succeeded in its task ☐.

Ball, Arnetha F., and Ted Lardner. *African American Literacies Unleashed: Vernacular English and the Composition Classroom*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005.

Caleb Corkery, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

The social mark left on those who grow up speaking African American vernacular English (AAVE) is seemingly indelible. The achievement gap between Black and White students persistently highlights the supposed liability of speaking AAVE, identifying it as a condition needing mitigation. At the historically Black university where I recently taught English, my colleagues initiated students into the world of academic language by grading papers with an error chart, deducting points for each linguistic deviation from Standard Edited American English. The department stood behind the pragmatic argument that helping students avoid racial discrimination means eradicating any racialized features in

their language use. Hammering home mainstream grammar and diction was the department's primary mission.

The stigma AAVE speakers face appears monumental when viewed through the lens of our country's obdurate racist legacy. But from the perspective of linguists, the issue is rather underwhelming. The separate language practices that developed in African American communities are viable and logical: to view them as wrong is itself wrong. That doesn't erase the "F" on a paper, though. Teachers must be practical and acknowledge the reign of the standard dialect. Yet do they also need to uphold a belief in the *supremacy* of the standard dialect?

Decades of research make plain that AAVE-speaking students feel demeaned by their teachers, directing scholars to concentrate on moving teachers toward tolerance of their students' linguistic backgrounds. This shift was formalized back in 1974 when the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) passed the "student's right to their own language" resolution to impress upon teachers that the problems students face with language learning is not in the student's language. The Black Caucus of CCCC urged teachers to regard their students' language as a resource. A steady stream of research emerged exploring issues related to race and writing, supporting the thrust of the 1974 resolution. But after thirty years, students' home literacies continue to be valued only in the theoretical realm. Negative teacher attitudes continue to plague AAVE-speaking students, leading exasperated scholars Arnetha Ball and Ted Lardner to claim that "the teaching corps of composition professionals has yet to live up to the challenge to reconstruct pedagogy to make the most of the literacy potentials of all students" (189).

African American Literacies Unleashed is an impatient clarion call finally to put to rest the forces that drag down our AAVE-speaking students. The book justifies this exigency by showing the confluence of research from various disciplines that support how long overdue this solution is. Ball and Lardner suggest how to reconstruct the teacher's role to allow "African American voices to be heard, legitimized, and leveraged within the writing classroom" (185). They direct this point toward teachers, of course, but realize the network of people involved in supporting that transformation. They tell writing program administrators to build consensus with teachers about program goals, given the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student body. They tell teacher educators to pass on "instructional resources, materials, and methodologies that are representative of a wide variety of different ethnic and cultural experiences" (185). To researchers, they ask to bring the theorizing of race into practices in the classroom. These authors are not just proposing a teacher retraining program, but an entire reform movement.

Ball and Lardner explain their reform by first presenting their personal experiences, which are parts of their ultimate point. They were both shown by teachers how to "use their minds to engage the world, only in different ways—in ways that were different than the school's agenda" (4). However, Ball and Lardner's target is not programmatic changes. They are after the individual, since the journey to unleashing African American literacies begins with "seeing with new eyes" (16). They challenge teachers to examine their attitudes toward AAVE to become "aware of their own culturally influenced dispositions toward literacy" (32).

Ball and Lardner's goal is to reach the unconscious racist attitudes of well-meaning teachers. They pursue a new "set of terms" (outside of stated curricula)

that gives teachers a way to express their prejudicial responses to AAVE-speaking students. They want to rebuild teachers after first stripping, or exposing, the underlying racism.

The transformation process offered in the book hinges on certain kinds of knowledge that writing teachers need in order to improve their efficacy with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Efficacy, as the authors use the term, refers not only to teacher preparation but also to their confidence in knowing how to move all of their students toward success. As this comprehensive goal suggests, the needed knowledge comes from renegotiating both personal and professional identities. Ball and Lardner borrow from education, composition, and sociolinguistic scholars and from community-based organizations to theorize and illustrate the process.

The barriers to change, as the authors claim, are teacher attitudes that degrade AAVE-speaking students and a lack of alternative models for teachers to follow. Enhancing a teacher's sense of efficacy comes from examining the interaction between professional knowledge and personal experience. Ball and Lardner suggest teacher narratives to plumb these connections: "Teachers who confront the racialized power relations of their work in the writing classroom frequently need help in figuring out a satisfactory story for themselves. Through such stories, teachers interpret their efforts on behalf of all students and the communities they serve" (61). Narratives help teachers connect their internalized role and the role demanded of them in the classroom. The best examples of this reconstruction process, the authors show us, come from community-based organizations.

For instance, a dance program established for at-risk female students (mostly African American) has gained recognition for helping these students excel. The high efficacy of the program is clear from the students' improved sense of discipline, self-esteem, and commitment. Likewise, the group's leader, a European American, has been transformed as a teacher by his engagement with his students: "His ongoing interactions with African Americans have provided him with many linguistic resources that he uses authentically and effectively to relate to the program participants and build bridges that link their cultural experiences, his own cultural experiences and mainstream American cultural practices and expectations" (64). Understanding the students' cultural background allows the troop leader to recognize opportunities to engage and motivate the students.

The same process can apply to composition instructors, aided by teacher narratives. By constructing a teacher-life story, which the authors model, one can examine the character of one's interactions with students: the attitude, atmosphere, and affect of the classroom. Since most writing teachers are white and not "socialized" to African American culture and language, race is a crucial element in reflecting on classroom relationships with students of color. Once the racialized dynamics are brought out, the authors recommend that teachers recognize the uses of AAVE-based discourse modes and patterns in their students' academic writing. Additionally, teachers should go beyond "knowledge about" AAVE and appreciate the language abilities possessed by their students. Then, once the teacher's authority is based on familiarity with the students' abilities, the expectations for success are authentic and truly motivate the students.

Ball and Lardner offer strategies for achieving their theoretical objectives; however, their suggestions describe ideas that can direct classroom practices rather than ways to implement them. The approaches they suggest include, among oth-

ers, confronting racial prejudices that may predetermine relationships with student, allowing emotional expression in the classroom (unlike the restraint familiar within mainstream discourses), holding high expectations of all students, creating opportunities for students to play various empowering roles, integrating performance into the classroom, incorporating oral discourse patterns into the classroom, and developing teacher knowledge of AAVE discourse patterns.

Among composition scholars, these suggestions are hardly new, though never before compiled so comprehensively. For decades, educators committed to multiculturalism have been moving toward their students. Among many others, Patricia Bizzell, Bonnie Lisle, and Sandra Mano have been using readings and rhetorics that represent their students' cultural background. Wendy Hesford and Anthony Fox accept students' home literacies into the classroom. Geneva Smitherman blends community and academic literacies. Marcia Farr and Brian Street have studied the value of literacy practices outside of the academy. Mary Soliday and Scott Blake use narratives to connect personal literacies to school. Composition studies already embraces Ball and Lardner's thesis.

But this is part of their point. If scholars understand the need to bridge community literacies into school settings, why do negative attitudes toward AAVE-speaking students persist? Ball and Lardner suggest that the problem is a matter of commitment. Their answer is to incorporate what we know into who we are as teachers. The book tilts at centuries of assumed supremacy cultivated by white privilege, which becomes embedded in the practice of teaching writing. Ball and Lardner ask teachers to go beyond their professional roles, personally undoing what a history of racism has done to them. Quixotic as their ambition may be, they provide a pathway for writing teachers to change their racist patterns when relating to students with different linguistic backgrounds. Pointing out the dramatic lengths necessary to correct inculcated discrimination, the authors challenge all teachers to re-imagine the way culture shapes the roles we embody. ☞

Banks, Adam J. *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006.

Joel Kline, Lebanon Valley College

In *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, Adam Banks takes on topics like access to computers for education and the oppressive character of technology in the Black community. It is a complicated issue. Sometimes Banks is skillful at identifying and analyzing root causes of technology oppression. Other times his definition of technology is a bit too nebulous. However, his study frames the complexity and breadth of technology's role in the Black community and stimulates thinking about how education and rhetorical acumen can make a difference.

Banks does fine work in separating the concept of access from the real engagement of technology. He explores the Digital Divide in Chapter Two and establishes an argument to redefine the concept of access more inclusively (38). His conceptualization of access illustrates the true engagement with technology necessary for equality to emerge. Banks documents how the accepted concept of access is a poor measure of true learning in an educational setting. This idea of

access was sold as a productive solution to schools during the 1990s, when it actually was simply a start. Genuine technology success stories have only occurred in education when teachers turn students into producers and authors. However, it is not just predominantly Black schools where this is failing to happen or only now emerging. I challenge you to show me a school anywhere that improved learning solely by the fact that it was wired. Banks has a well-grounded argument that can be employed across disciplines and certainly is not limited to any race or socio-economical category. Banks blames computer companies for trying to sell products to school districts that did not solve problems. This indictment of capitalistic America turns the argument away from where it needs to go: to the communities—the teachers, school boards, and parents—who play the most influential roles in the realization of Banks's sage prescription for creating transformative access (45). Employing polemical terms like "swindled" (44), Banks blames corporations for a problem that is inherently local and community-based. It releases the community from its obligation to shoulder the load of fostering transformative access at home and in education.

In Chapter Two, Banks uses the failures of mere access to develop a comprehensive taxonomy for the concept of access that builds on the work of James Porter's *Rhetorical Ethics and Internetworked Writing*. The taxonomy includes material, functional, experiential, and critical accesses (44). This taxonomy serves as a framework to examine larger issues and identify shortcomings in providing a voice and equality to the Black community. I found the taxonomy in this section to be a valuable tool in framing the subject. It provides a perfect structure for both the scholar and the lay person in African American rhetoric to categorize institutions and artifacts.

In Chapter Three, Banks shifts to discuss the development of a Black digital *ethos*. Banks develops this *ethos* by noting how Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used the technology of television during the civil rights era. Despite the success of Malcolm X and Dr. King, Banks feels that many technologies continue to be exclusionary, and so a new *ethos* must be established to achieve equality. This section provides a concise but rich perspective on technology use during the Civil Rights Movement, especially for readers who have not viewed Malcolm X or Dr. King through the lens of technology. Banks astutely notes that both leaders were adept at using technology, specifically television news coverage. I am unsure, however, that I would take what these civil rights icons said about specific broadcast technologies forty years ago and map them to current computer technology arguments. However, Banks does a credible job of explaining a new *ethos* for the Black community using the rhetorical acumen of Malcolm X and Dr. King as the backdrop. He states,

The combination of mastery of individual technological tools and a more general theoretical awareness come together in what I argue needs to become a Black digital ethos—a set of attitudes, knowledges, expectations, and commitments that we develop and teach and bring to our engagement with things technological. (47)

In this section, he also explains how the oral tradition of African Americans is hard to represent through technology. Banks is honest about the difficulties that the African American oral tradition poses for transition to technology. It is here

that I think he could add the promises of new technology. Podcasts, video sites, and cell phone audio are simple technologies that might be able to respond to Bank's call to preserve the oral tradition yet participate in technology.

In the process of searching for higher ground, Banks returns to the idea of Black rhetorical engagement with technology and the importance of being a producer. His final chapter provides effective advice: he expands upon his earlier components of functional, critical, and experiential access to technology and provides insight as to how we as educators can begin the process. Banks's theme about educating producers is significant. Young people carve out their discourse communities with text messaging, MySpace, and Facebook. Senior citizens have jumped on the net in droves, primarily as a way to maintain contact via email with friends and family. No one but a group itself can truly foster the production of producers. By inviting the growth of producers, we, as educators, can play a role in the issue. Rap became a popular and expressive form of music because Rap artists learned how to become producers and provide their audience with content that was desirable. This is what needs to happen in order for Blacks (or any group) to be technology producers.

In addition, throughout the text, Banks pointedly cites research that identifies the insidious side of technology and its oppression of Blacks. He notes Andrew Feenberg's claim, in phrasing reminiscent of Dr. King's own, that "neither time nor technology are [sic] positive or negative in and of themselves, but they reflect the ideological commitments of society" (63). This construct is central to the book and might explain why Banks ventures to places that may not seem to be particularly technologically rooted. He explores the work of Richard and Cynthia Selfe and supplants it with that of Beth Kolko and her studies on computer interfaces built for Whites. Banks also uses the technologically-centered writing of Abdul Alkalimat to frame the subject of technology and expand the use of the word. Sometimes that word *technology* is a bit too expansive, however.

If this book has a shortcoming, it is the author's nebulous definition of technology. Chapter Five is emblematic of Banks's failure to tightly define technology for scholarly purposes. Banks supports the case for the oppression that Blacks encounter in the U.S. legal system by grounding it in technology. As serious as this argument and its impacts are to African Americans, it is not a technology issue. Therein lies the problem with a number of Banks's arguments: what does he really mean by "technology"? Technology is often ill-defined and used to encompass different areas in different chapters. This slippery treatment of technology weakens the organization of the book. In several places, Banks discusses technology access and really gets to the heart of how Blacks have been shut out of cyberspace. In other places, he uses technology as a flimsy method to pull in institutional areas that might be oppressive, but certainly are not oppressive due to a generally accepted definition of technology. If these areas that do not seem to be related to technology truly are the result of technology oppression, then Banks needs to present data or research to support that argument. When he expands technology to conveniently mean *anything*, he debases his central argument. If technology is television, media, the legal system, education, business, police and weapons, political access and voting, as Banks states in different parts of the book, then technology becomes a word for life itself. This lack of definition makes the book's intention seem more like a re-reading of history rather than a forward-looking search for higher ground.

As I closed Banks's study, I felt I needed to be shown more explicitly where technology serves as an oppressor, and I needed more practicable advice on how to counter that oppression. I do concur with Banks's core notion that all students will benefit from becoming producers. But, while Banks has made a case for technology's role in oppression, the argument needs to continue with more research and dialogue. Otherwise, people will think we have achieved equality because schools are wired, desktops sell for \$299, and Blacks are the fastest growing group on the Internet. And dangerously—as Banks argues when the Digital Divide issue disappears after the achievement of mere functional access (41)—America will feel like we have accomplished something when we have only barely begun. ☐

Emery, Kathy, and Susan Ohanian. *Why Is Corporate America Bashing Our Public Schools?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004.

Terri Pullen Guezzar, Independent Scholar

*Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts
We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of
fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact.
You must discard the Word fancy altogether This is the new discovery.*

This is fact. This is taste.
—Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

When I first read these lines over twenty years ago, I enjoyed the satirical depictions of Gradgrind and M'Choakumchild. They were obvious exaggerations—and comfortably far away in terms of culture and time. Right? Who would have thought that the Industrial Revolution's impact on education that Charles Dickens satirized over 150 years ago would apply so readily today? I doubted my recollection of this work so much that I pawed piles of old paperbacks to find my own yellowed copy, full of notes.

Janet Emery and Susan Ohanian show us that the reality behind a Dickens novel is very much alive and well—a world where school children are dehumanized as “little vessels ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim,” all for the greater good and the “national prosperity” (48). The one big difference between then and now is that many of our teachers, administrators, and school boards are not so sure about this “new discovery.”

The main premise of this work is clear: Corporate America, the U.S. government, and all major media outlets have systematically formed an alliance over the past two decades to the detriment of our public schools. Supporters of the standards-based reform agenda in secondary education, referred to herein as “Standardistas,” extol the virtues of rigorous academic standards, business-driven outcomes, and the demand for highly-skilled workers in the global economy.

All of this comes at a very high price to students' social development, teachers' influence over the classroom, and the local school board's governance and

control over the educational process. Emery and Ohanian detail the top-down shift toward a test-driven, standards-based agenda where business has influenced the federal government which, in turn, has influenced state governments and educational standards. What's missing? Educators, students, and parents driving the decisions.

In order to illustrate this alliance, Chapters One through Four examine the political agenda and sophistry surrounding the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110) as well as that of standards-based school reform advocacy groups. In particular, Emery and Ohanian expose the economic power and political impact of the Business Round Table (BRT), a group of CEOs formed in 1972 to promote corporate interests in educational policy. To the BRT, a highly skilled workforce is our one, true competitive advantage in the new global economy. They also have advanced the notion that our public schools have "failed" in developing this highly trained workforce. Teachers, administrators, and locally-elected school boards are the primary targets in this blame game.

To a lesser degree, the authors also point out the pervasive influence of Marc Tucker, founder and president of National Center for Education and the Economy, and one of the founders of the standards-based reform movement. In his famous "Dear Hillary letter," Tucker outlines educational reform initiatives, many of which have become law through various legislation such as Goals 2000, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization, and No Child Left Behind.

Herein is the essential irony of this debate: while the BRT heralds the absolute necessity of this skilled workforce, the Bureau of Labor Statistics asserts that by 2010 only 22% of the jobs available will require a bachelor's degree, and only nine percent will require an associate's. Nonetheless, NCLB mandates that all schools will be 100% compliant with the new achievement standards, all aligned with college-prep, by 2014. Thus the U.S. will have 100% of the workforce ready to go to college to compete for 22-31% of all available jobs. That is, those who are able to graduate high school.

This reform movement cascades in its impact as the national BRT influences state-level BRTs. Lobbying at both the national and state levels, these round tables have focused primarily on states, influencing the standards-based agenda and supporting state-mandated testing. But this control goes even farther. Emery and Ohanian discuss in Chapter Five instances where opposition in local school boards was weeded out through the very election process that was intended to keep it an arena under local control. The national and state-level legislation mandates standards and promotes a core college-prep curriculum for all students, to the detriment of the arts, vocational training, and even physical education. Students who cannot pass the state-mandated exams—many of whom never intend to go to college anyway—are denied a high school diploma, resulting in a high drop-out rate. What is more, the authors indicate that schools performing up to these new standards get more money and the autonomy to deliver a more flexible curriculum of their choice. Meanwhile, under-performing schools experience economic sanctions and "drill and kill" pressure to teach toward the exam. Schools that don't perform well on the tests have their art, music, and physical education classes cut.

The authors drill down into the pervasive influence of this "Standardista" agenda on local governance, demonstrating how the corporate agenda has infiltrated the mission statements of school systems great and small. Emery and

Ohanian examine how all areas of influence have been co-opted—national teacher unions, educational researchers, even teachers themselves—all in an effort to bring school governance into line with the perceived needs of the “new economy.” The authors also identify a covert agenda: the more it can be argued that public education has failed, the more palatable privatizing school management can become.

One of the most influential roadmaps of the BRT is the California Business Roundtable’s *Re-Structuring California Education: A Design for Public Education in the Twenty-First Century* (1989), and this document continues to shape education reform policy (Chapter Eight). According to this plan, state government is responsible for setting goals that the schools must meet. In order to economize, schools would teach the same core content in K-10, after which students could test *into* college prep, vocation/technical education, or fine or performing arts. According to this plan, everyone has “options”: high schools can opt to teach K-10 only, and parents can then opt for alternative schools. Not surprisingly, the latter is heavily supported by corporate entities.

The authors describe how over the next nine years, the CBR effectively infused the BRT core values into legislation, solidifying a state-sanctioned performance index, subsequent economic sanctions and rewards, and “interventions” for low-performing schools that could eventually result in a state management takeover or school closure. Chapter Nine reveals how such legislation led to the San Francisco Unified School District’s reconstitution policy, “a punishment-and-reward system based on test scores” which, in fact, countered previous efforts at desegregation. Resulting from a 1978 segregation lawsuit brought by the NAACP, the district agreed that nineteen of its schools were inadvertently racially segregated. Thus, the state implemented “targeted programs” for these schools, ultimately resulting in the dismissal and replacement of any educator who could not or would not adhere to the high standards doctrine.

But what about the opposition? In Chapter Seven, Emery and Ohanian do list some parties untainted by the BRT agenda: WestEd, Industrial Areas Foundation, and independent grassroots groups such as Mass Refusal, FairTest, and the Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education (CARE). But these non-profit organizations are unable to compete financially and politically with the wealthier, pro-standards special interest groups backed by industry and federal and state government. In states such as Massachusetts, school districts that chose to grant high school diplomas to students who met all local standards, but who failed the state-mandated exam, backed down when the state threatened to revoke funding.

Just as it was easy to tell myself that *Hard Times* represented a life remote from my own, it is tempting to think the new “bottom line” in education doesn’t extend to higher education. But, as public university systems undergo funding cuts on a regular basis, it isn’t that difficult to imagine that federal and state governments could “opt-out” of more and more funding, rationalizing that, thanks to the newfound effectiveness of our public schools with their college-prep curriculum, fewer seats are needed these days. In a “cost-effective” world, we all may find ourselves reckoning with the true cost in immeasurable terms. ☐