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Reviews

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REVIEWS

Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition. Ed. Anne Frances Wysocki, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Cynthia L. Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc. Logan: Utah State UP, 2004.

Mary Pettice, Lebanon Valley College

When I was in graduate school in the early 90s, the professor under whom I taught undergraduates decided that we should incorporate computer technology into the teaching of writing. So, instead of receiving a stack of papers from the students in my section, I received a computer disk onto which people in the campus computer center had put my students' work. I'd grade in the computer lab since my home computer was a PC and the school used Macintoshes; the high-tech assessment methods I was asked to follow basically amounted to jumping into a line of student writing, **in a bold font, to point out errors in syntax, logic, spelling, and grammar**, and writing notes at the end of the essay that attempted to summarize the sorts of observations that I would ordinarily have introduced in the margins of the paper. The system worked, I suppose. But using computers in this limited application was a little like writing while wearing a blindfold or forcing my right-handed self to use a left-handed mouse. I could do it, but the effort at duplicating my normal practices by using a limited alternative medium seemed needlessly great.

When I assisted another professor the next semester, I gratefully returned to accepting stacks of stapled papers and enjoyed the freedom of letting my pen communicate my corrections and suggestions directly to the student in a way that made spatial sense to me. Sure, my handwriting was inferior to crisply fonted phrases, but I was able to easily denote the different levels of assistance and evaluation I offered each student through the use of copy editing marks, arrows and stars, and marginalia that seemed unmistakably targeted to the matter at hand.

And so my first exposure to the concept of using new media technologies in the teaching of writing merely focused on the scribal nature of the computer. At the same time, of course, in my theory and literature courses, I was developing a postmodern engagement with which I now greet the advent of new media technologies and the recognition that academic culture unfairly privileges alphabetic texts. I went on to teach composition, literature, journalism, and even new media as a generalist at a small liberal arts college, but the concepts I championed in literary, cultural, and media studies were displaced when I taught freshmen to write; for me, the teaching of composition remained off by itself, stranded on a Greek peninsula of time, championing my genuine fondness for 2,500-year-old tropes.

Looking back after reading *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*, I give myself a small amount of credit for beginning to prepare myself for its message, however slow my process. My discomfort with bland PowerPoint presentations emanated both from my initial rejection of these clumsy efforts to unite attractive copy and higher thought, and

a nagging feeling that glorified outlines couldn't possibly be the end of uniting technology and communication. In my New Media course, students created final projects in HTML, exploring specific issues in journalism as they applied to new technologies, exploiting possibilities of arguing through presenting ideas in a multi-layered format, documenting sources through links to pages in a pop-up window. In my journalism and editing courses, we endlessly talk about interactive blogs and the balance of political power, the achievements and failures of online newspaper design, and the elegance and power of databases. In composition courses, we study evaluation and documentation of online sources, but I continue to require written assignments that haven't materially changed in two decades. In short, nothing I did in my other courses rubbed off on the teaching of composition. (I don't award myself any points for allowing students to e-mail me their Word documents or hand in work via Blackboard's digital dropbox.)

In *Writing New Media*, the authors remind the audience that we have already bought into contemporary theories of text; in the introduction, Anne Frances Wysocki writes:

But we do understand, now, that writing, like all literate practices, only exists because it functions, circulates, shifts, and has varying value and weight within complexly articulated social, cultural, political, educational, religious, economic, familial, ecological, political, artistic, affective, and technological webs (you can name others, I'm sure). (2)

Indeed, each of the book's four authors affirms the audience's collective understandings of cultural and literary theory, and the importance of this knowledge leads the authors to their next assertion: that it is therefore rather surprising that many embrace these theories everywhere but in the composition classroom.

The authors then make the case that we're doing our students a disservice by focusing their compositional efforts in the medium we have mistakenly labeled as timeless—that what is essential about the arrangement of persuasive text is not alphabetic text essay structure but, in Geoffrey Sirc's words, a process of “research, selection, arrangement, expression” (126) that can just as easily incorporate visual and other digital media as it can topic-sentence paragraphs. Cynthia L. Selfe emphasizes the ethical dimensions for a marked shift in our pedagogy, asserting that:

if we continue to define literacy in ways that ignore or exclude new media texts, we not only abdicate a professional responsibility to describe accurately and robustly how humans communicate, and how they compose and read in contemporary contexts, but we also run the risk of our curriculum holding declining relevance for students. (55)

While we, as writing instructors, are being recruited for this task, however, we're also being told that we're the last best hope. Indeed, this point—that we must challenge ourselves to re-construct the idea of written text for our students' sakes—accompanies two reassurances: that writing teachers already possess the critical methods by which to alter their approach to the teaching of writing and that perhaps no one is better prepared to address the subject of new media communications than writing teachers. Wysocki claims, “I want to argue that writing

about new media needs to be informed by what writing teachers know, precisely because writing teachers focus specifically on texts and how situated people . . . use them to make things happen" (5). The authors' reassurances suggest that the process of adapting new media theory to the teaching of writing can be, and should be, done on terms set forth by the experts in the field of composition.

Furthering the book's main argument, Selfe assures the reader that she understands the reluctance to consider other kinds of literacies because of how much we've invested in this form. "Teachers continue to privilege alphabetic literacy over visual literacy," she notes, ". . . because they have already invested so heavily in writing, writing instruction and writing programs—and because we have achieved some status as practitioners and specialists of writing" (71). One benefit for overcoming this reluctance, she argues, is that "we may also extend the usefulness of composition studies in a changing world" (72). The ideas of extending and expanding our repertoire offer both challenge and assurance throughout the book, and this necessarily introduction-heavy text clearly lays out the need for new practices and the theory supporting it—and then the text goes on to offer us many detailed applications for use in the classroom. Selfe encourages us to explore these ideas without the pressure to be experts; the applications are presented as opportunities for students and teachers to be co-learners.

The chapter entitled "Box-Logic" by Geoffrey Sirc illustrates some of the charms of these applications. Sirc offers us the example of the artist Joseph Cornell's boxes as a visual representation of the selection, arrangement, and presentation processes that we use in alphabetic communication and that can easily be applied to a multimedia environment. One of his research-oriented assignments capitalizes on the curatorial role of the writer and requires a survey of Internet sources, both text and image, to pull together a Web page that demonstrates "how well-chosen text and imagery can combine to form an interesting, informative, oftentimes delightful narrative" (136). The detailed assignment emphasizes familiar data collection and annotation strategies; Sirc writes, "I like a mix of summary, quotation, pithy analysis, and personal/reflective writing" (134) and encourages teachers to cover basic research concepts and practices, perhaps with the guidance of a campus librarian.

As part of the book's emphasis on affirming and expanding on the skills we already possess and teach, Sirc argues that his "Research Box" assignment can help students to better understand the requirements of academic prose. Parts of the Web-based assignment, he explains, "have academic cachet and can serve as the seeds for a more polished, self-contained prose genre (an analysis, reflection, narrative, or some mixed genre), which can be a required component of the assignment" (136).

The book offers workable activities clearly echoing the structures that alphabetic composition values while at the same time offering the new media contexts in which we must now teach composition. Throughout, the assignments are familiar in concept if not in execution, and the authors continue to remind the audience that we already possess the skills to master new technologies and integrate a thorough understanding of new media into the teaching of writing. ☐

Miller, Richard E. *Writing at the End of the World*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2005.

Kerrie R. H. Farkas, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

September 11, 2001. Most Americans know not only where they were but also what they were doing when newscasters aired the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center. I was in my townhouse in Ohio, getting ready to teach my composition courses, when my mother-in-law called and told me to turn on the television. As I watched the scene of the first crash play over and over again, I experienced both shock and disbelief. A few minutes later, as I witnessed the second plane flying into the South Tower, shock and disbelief turned into fear.

Everyone has a story and a connection to 9/11, and my story involves my sister and a postcard that she sent to me in 1997, a postcard that is still fastened to the bulletin board in my office, thumb-tacked initially as a source of pride for my sister and now as a reminder of how quickly life can change. The postcard, which features a picture of the World Trade Center, contains a written message with an arrow pointing to the 70th floor that says, "I am here," with the "here" referring to the floor on which my sister would be working in her new position at Morgan Stanley. My sister sent such postcards to everyone in the family after she landed this career-changing position in the accounting field. On September 11, 2001, when I watched the first plane crash into the North Tower, mixed in with the shock and disbelief, was relief that my sister had decided, just a year prior and against common sense and friend and family advice, to leave the field of accounting to pursue other interests. Part of me is unreservedly thankful that she made that decision, and the other part is guilt-ridden for feeling this way. The weeks following 9/11 are a blur. The fear, the doubt, the sadness, the emptiness consumed me. I cannot imagine how those who lost someone felt. When life-changing events like this take place, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid questioning whether what one is doing in life is meaningful.

In his book *Writing at the End of the World*, Richard Miller questions the point of teaching reading and writing in a world where unspeakable events such as 9/11, Columbine, and the Oklahoma City bombing occur and asks how reading and writing might be made to matter in such a world. The answer, for Miller, lies in what he calls the institutional autobiography, the intersection of the personal and the institutional and the place where writing can be used to determine how institutions simultaneously inspire, endorse, control, and prohibit discourse. The book itself is a manifestation of Miller's own autobiographical journey, illustrating how the institutional autobiography might work and also pointing to ways in which those in the humanities might provide students with genuine opportunities to read and write in ways that matter. Although the numerous threads of individuals and events woven throughout the text are sometimes difficult to connect—for instance, Chapter Seven discusses at least nineteen stories, some about Miller's father's suicide, some about the 1998 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, some about a well-known essayist that visited his campus, and some about T.S. Eliot's biography—such a method does allow readers to see the difficulty inherent in revealing private history in a public realm as well as the complexity involved in such a brave endeavor.

In Chapter One, Miller begins his story by depicting a number of catastrophic events that have occurred in the last decade and by successfully illuminating the bleakness and the hopelessness that many people experience when such events occur. In fact, Miller does not allow his audience merely to *read* about the devastation of these events; he makes them feel the loss and the powerlessness, and he also makes it impossible not to question the relevance of teaching reading and writing in the wake of all the destruction. For instance, when discussing Columbine, Miller claims that the two students who were responsible for the massacre were enrolled in school, read numerous texts, and wrote and produced countless documents for all types of media: “they read, they wrote, they talked. And at the end of the process, they tried to kill everyone they could” (5). In illustrating the impossibility of discovering the reason, the cause, and the justification for such extreme horrors and in conceding that these horrors will inevitably happen again and again, Miller skillfully compels readers to reexamine the goals of the humanities in general and of the teaching of writing in particular.

In the second chapter, Miller sets his proposed *institutional autobiography* in the context of the field and distinguishes it from the 1990s turn to the personal movement by claiming that he is interested specifically in the interplay between the personal and academic rather than just in the personal. In fact, according to Miller, he is primarily interested in the institutional forces on personal experience or the “allocation of cultural capital in the academy played out at the level of experience” (41). As he suggests in the book, for him, the teaching of reading and writing is tied up in the need to be seen and heard; thus, he argues that teachers might see their work as learning how to speak and write so that others can see and hear them and to teach their students how to do this as well. According to Miller, this is the only approach for making the classroom a possible resource for hope.

In order to illustrate the importance of being seen and heard and to show the necessity of this approach to writing, Miller devotes Chapters Three and Four to debunking any notion that writing is transformative, to underscoring the significance of the more modest, subtle changes that reading and writing can produce, and to emphasizing the importance of the relationship and the connection between individual writers and the world. In a clever move, Miller argues that being seen and heard are that which makes us human: “being human allows us to be able to step out of the moment, to be able to represent oneself to oneself and to others, and to be able to reflect on what has been and to consider what might be” (111). That is, Miller argues that our job as teachers of writing is to examine how we can make ourselves seen and heard (i.e., representing ourselves to others) and to show students how to connect their individual lives with “the history, the culture, and the lives of the institutions that surround us all” (25). In constructing a syllogistic argument in this way—if all humans need to be seen and heard, and all students are human, then all students need to be seen and heard—Miller almost obligates his readers to acknowledge and accept his pedagogical approach to writing.

In Chapters Five and Six, Miller problematizes two existing pedagogies—Freire’s liberatory pedagogy and James Scott’s resistance pedagogy—and argues that between these two extreme representations of schooling lies the complex world of the classroom, a world where teachers need to find ways to help students develop understandings of bureaucratic discourse and to identify moments of potentially successful discursive interactions. For Miller, a pragmatic approach to teaching writing would allow students to identify such moments and

would offer the possibility of a classroom environment where both education's public transcript and students' hidden transcripts are heard. In tandem with such a pragmatic approach to writing, Miller advocates the institutional autobiography, a genre that unites the personal and the institutional and that allows students to find their own narrative to acquire "the skills necessary for persisting in the ongoing project of navigating life in a bureaucracy" (138).

In the final chapter, Miller concludes his argument by reiterating the importance of a pragmatic pedagogy—an approach to teaching writing that acknowledges the complexity of the institution, a place where student voices can be lost and silenced—and by underscoring the value of the institutional autobiography, which provides students with an opportunity to use writing as a "vehicle for arriving at nuanced understandings of a lived reality" (196), connecting both the individual and the institutional. Thus, according to Miller, the institutional autobiography offers students occasions to retrace their histories in relation to their encounters with the educational system, and the pragmatic pedagogy offers students a method by which they can learn to speak in ways that others can hear.

In advocating as well as using the institutional autobiography, Miller makes a strong case for his approach to teaching writing. In fact, by implementing the institutional autobiography and by "smudging, interrogating, and peering across the boundary separating these two realms" (169), Miller successfully makes his private world public and also shows how such a method can work for both students and teachers of writing. ☐

Barasch, Marc Ian. *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness*. New York: Rodale, 2005.

Edward Sullivan, Lebanon Valley College

In *Radical Presence: Teaching as a Contemplative Practice*, Mary Rose O'Reilley tells a story about a student who was having difficulty completing a writing assignment in her course. In class, he looked miserable and rarely spoke. One day, he came to her office, and they talked for two hours. He revealed that several years ago his mother died suddenly and his father became a virtual mute. Worse yet, his father's silence had now gripped the entire family. At the end of their meeting, O'Reilley notes, nothing seemed to change. In fact, the student went on to drop her class. A few years later, the student came by to see her. He told her that on the day of his visit he was on his way to commit suicide (26).

That story has had an enormous impact on me. As a professor with several decades of experience, students have offered me many explanations for late assignments or missed exams. Over time, I had become quite callous and cynical about student excuses. In fact, I had lost much of my compassion—at least as it pertained to my teaching. So it was with great interest that I approached Marc Ian Barasch's foray into the heart of compassion and kindness. Are these qualities that arise naturally in all of us or, perhaps, only in some of us? Can these virtues be cultivated? These are several of the fundamental questions and answers Barasch explores in his book, one of the most provocative spiritual texts I have read in many years.

In his study, Barasch encounters theologians, therapists, neurobiologists, philosophers, and, most interestingly, seemingly ordinary people who embody this elu-

sive trait we call compassion. But what does compassion really mean? The author offers us a useful, working definition: kindness without condition. In the first chapter, Barasch introduces us to a married couple, Paul and Alicia, who have perfected the art of compassionate living. Paul claims that he learned compassion from his wife, who, in turn, learned it from her mother. Alicia recalls that her mother said "life's greatest joy was to 'pull the beauty out of people'" (21), a goal akin to that of our diverse pedagogies. Her eighth-grade educated mother continued that "the secret was just to take a genuine interest in others—just ask them questions, want to know how they are, really" (21). Listening as a compassionate act is a difficult practice, especially for those in the teaching profession where silence is too often equated with ignorance and not wisdom. I suspect that whatever transpired between O'Reilley and her suicidal student involved some very deep listening.

Is there an evolutionary basis for compassion? In Chapter Two, Barasch learns of numerous instances where apes and chimps "exhibit what we think of as human values: aid to the weak, sharing of resources, social rules that reward good citizen" (33). Apparently, life in the animal kingdom is not quite as nasty and brutish as one might expect. Then, in Chapter Three, Barasch explores the gateway to compassion: empathy. Some individuals, like mystics, are empathic geniuses, while others, like those with autism or Asperger's syndrome, appear oblivious to sensing the mental states of others. Assuming one does not fall into the latter category, can an individual become more empathic and, in turn, more compassionate? This is the subject of the fourth chapter, where the author does his field work by living on the streets of Denver for a week. Street retreats are the brainchild of the American Zen teacher Bernie Glassman. What better way is there to learn about compassion than by living among the homeless and destitute? Barasch's retreat is led by a former convict and current Zen student named, improbably, Fleet Maull. In this memorable adventure, the author encounters contempt, indifference, and startling acts of generosity. Reading this chapter one might conclude that compassion can be developed—if we are able to relinquish our preconceived notions and viewpoints.

Chapter Five, entitled "The Good Eye," further supports the theme that compassion requires a change in perception. Barasch takes the title of this chapter from the Rabbi of Berditchev, a nineteenth century mystic, who could not see the sins of others; he saw only their virtues, hence the "good eye" (101). The author interviews several people he feels possess this trait and solicits some practical suggestions on how to acquire it. The reader should be forewarned that no quick fixes are offered, just advice on establishing a lifelong practice, and it does take *practice*.

In the previous chapter, Barasch mentions a friend who says that whenever she sees any human suffering, "My mind drops into my heart" (77). She describes it as an acute physical and emotional response. Well, does the heart have a mind of its own? This is the question that forms the basis for the next chapter. Rather than consulting poets for an answer, Barasch once again finds himself in the company of scientists. While the heart receives impulses from the brain, current research suggests that a feedback mechanism may exist. In other words, the heart seems to send information to the brain. The author discusses some remarkable research that indicates that the meditation practices of Hindu yogis and Tibetan lamas provide a portal to greater compassion.

The next two chapters are essentially paired together and deal with "do-gooders." For example, Chapter Seven introduces us to a 46-year-old man

who donates a kidney to an Ethiopian refugee whom he doesn't know. What compels a person to do this? Once, I worked with a woman who made a similar donation to someone who was, at best, a bare acquaintance. I was awed by her generosity. As another colleague said to me, "I *might* give a kidney to a family member, but that's where I draw the line." Further, the same colleague wondered if the donor simply craved attention. Apparently, Barasch notes, the charge of grandstanding is often (quietly) leveled at these donors. Well, maybe, but surely there must be an easier way to curry fame. More insightful is a comment by another kidney donor who said that the whole issue of giving centered on "dealing with the fear of not having enough" (157). Perhaps, that says it all.

In the following chapter, the author moves from the particular to the general by examining altruism. Even as a reasonably informed member of the academy, I was surprised by how many disciplines weigh-in on this subject. For example, biologists interpret altruistic behavior as a way to improve the likelihood of passing on our genes. (We are more likely to do something nice for a relative than a stranger.) Psychologists point to the narcissistic rewards of our noble deeds. (A kidney, anyone?) Economists, however, couch such actions in terms of costs and benefits. (Remember, there is no such thing as a free lunch!) Perhaps most intriguing is the newly emerging field called the sociology of compassion, pioneered by the Holocaust survivor Samuel Oliner and his wife, Pearl. The Oliners began their research by investigating why some people were willing to risk everything in order to hide Jews from the Nazis. I'll give you a tidbit: these people were "unusually empathetic" (175).

All right, so some of us are truly remarkable people, capable of exhibiting unnerving compassion. Suppose you are not one of them. Suppose you have a hard time turning the other cheek and forgiving others or, maybe, yourself. These are the issues considered in the next few chapters. Interviewing victims of embezzlement, infidelity, rape, and murder, Barasch wants to know how some individuals transmute their rage into forgiveness. While the author does not completely succeed in his quest, he uncovers a tantalizing clue: "it is not the wrong-doer's repentance that creates forgiveness, but the victim's forgiveness that creates repentance. This is where forgiveness enters the realm of paradox and panacea; becomes a mysterious gift offered to one who does not merit it; becomes the essence of compassion itself" (239).

Throughout the book, there is a theme that what we do affects all of us. Hindus refer to this inter-connectedness of being as Indra's Net; Buddhists call it codependent origination; the Lakota Sioux say *mitakuye oyasin*—all beings are my relatives (308). In the final chapter, Barasch explores the scientific basis for this belief. His research suggests that such a basis may exist, although the evidence appears tenuous. Nonetheless, given such a tentative conclusion, I was still sorry to reach the end of this book.

Well, are there any firm conclusions to be wrought from these field notes? On his deathbed, Aldous Huxley was asked what he had learned about life. He said, "It's embarrassing to tell you this, but it seems to come down mostly to just learning to be kinder" (340). I'm thinking about putting that quote on my desk, facing me. That way, I can read it whenever a student drops by my office. ☐

Work Cited

O'Reilly, Mary Rose. *Radical Presence: Teaching as Contemplative Practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1998.

Mayers, Tim. *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2005.

Brad Lucas, Texas Christian University

I started reading this book while my department was searching for an endowed chair in creative writing, a rare position and one new to our university. Like any search for new colleagues, this one raised the expected questions about the role of the English department and the future of the discipline, but issues also surfaced about the role of creative writing in the curriculum—and, of course, the affinities, boundaries, and tensions among rhetoric, composition, and creative writing. Such concerns are commonplaces in the history of writing, and Tim Mayers addresses these issues—and many more—in *(Re)Writing Craft*, showing readers not only how creative writing and composition initially parted ways, but how the two can be brought back into a productive alignment that could benefit us all.

While Mayers focuses on several threads of inquiry, two stand out more than others: his concept of “craft criticism” and his ideas for institutional reform. The book is organized around five chapters that highlight these two trajectories. The first chapter lays out the problems, tensions, and historical rifts that plague the landscape of literary study, composition, and creative writing. The second and third chapters focus on craft criticism, situating it in historical context and explaining its theoretical potency for crafting an alliance between composition and creative writing. This new alliance as “writing studies” has been growing in currency over the years, but Mayers does much more than just champion terms or proclaim rising movements. Instead, in his fourth and fifth chapters, Mayers articulates the ways of thinking that might promote reform, and he sets out a “blueprint for change” that identifies specific areas where work can be done: in the classroom, the curriculum, our hiring practices, and our professional organizations. While it can be perfunctory for a book review like this one to map out a book’s architecture, I want to underscore that this book’s organization and approach are outstanding, inviting readers to retain and remember the shape of his productive discussion—perhaps so we can replicate it in our home institutions.

Chapter One charts the “shifting boundaries” of English, identifying literary studies as “an institutional wedge” that separates creative writing from composition, but Mayers makes it clear that he’s not aiming to unify the two against a common enemy in literature. Instead, he approaches his task with respect to an audience that might not be familiar with the long-standing debates and problematic hierarchies in English studies. Indeed, another strength in Mayers’s book is its accessibility, prompting me to recommend it to several of my colleagues. Being trained in composition studies, I cannot speak to his treatment of creative writing, but Mayers clearly understands the disciplinary life and folkways of composition studies, which he claims “has reached an important stage in its development and is possibly ready to expand its scope to encompass territory commonly thought to belong only to creative writing” (10). But, as with the other tensions negotiated in the chapter, Mayers does not suggest that the one co-

opt the other. Instead, he explains the institutional logics of both areas so we can see the tensions more clearly and understand the points of resistance on each side. Through concepts like “the institutional-conventional wisdom” of creative writing, Mayers distills the notion of “craft” as something that is teachable (unlike “natural” talent), and, in doing so, offers us useful terms for considering change.

Mayers first coined “craft criticism” in the early 1990s, and in Chapter Two, he posits craft criticism as an emergent area of work in the creative writing community. It would be an injustice to distill his definition to just a few sentences, but in general terms craft criticism is a form of critical-pedagogical work focused on the production—and evaluative formation—of text, rather than its interpretation (34). Mayers provides a historical overview of this genre, tracing its lineage in the scholarship of literature, creative writing, and composition and rhetoric. Clearly, Mayers has read carefully through the works of these writing communities, and, although he makes no claims to exhaustive coverage, he provides a textual roadmap to support his claims that craft criticism has thrived under various names and guises for decades. To help us recognize craft criticism when we see it, Mayers explains four categories that craft critics generally emphasize—authorship, composing processes, genre boundaries/definitions, and institutionality—and then demonstrates “how craft criticism exists across the entire range of the contemporary landscape of creative writing” (47–48). The chapter is not merely a retread of discussions that have circulated since the New Critics; instead, Mayers provides an understanding of craft criticism that has its roots in such work but enables us to think forward. For example, at the end of Chapter Two, he introduces the work of Charles Baxter, who aims to situate fiction, narrative, and stories in our contemporary cultural milieu, wherein the violence of information-flows overshadows the “stillness” of traditional narratives (61). After all, digital media will continue to challenge English studies, and Mayers invokes contemporary concerns without belaboring their implications or repercussions.

In Chapter Three, Mayers takes us into deeper theoretical terrain by situating Martin Heidegger’s work as the axis for a discussion of craft criticism. Heidegger’s juxtapositioning of poetry with instrumental-material technology offers Mayers a way to frame our thinking about the turf-battles and ideological gray areas among creative writing, literary studies, and composition and rhetoric. It also opens possibilities for seeing how coalitions and conscious alignments can prepare us for the future of English studies which, by all indicators, will continue to be enveloped with questions and concerns about technology and materiality. In this chapter, then, we can easily see one instance in which craft criticism can provide a common conceptual vocabulary for the disparate and diverse stakeholders in English. Mayers does not stop there, however, as he brings his ideas through the work of Sherod Santos, Paul Kameen, James Kinneavy, Wayne Dodd, Joe Wenderoth, Heather McHugh, Judith Halden-Sullivan, Ann Lauterbach, and Lynn Worsham. Mayers’s even-handed treatment of these writers from an array of writing studies is a credit to the importance of “cross-over” scholarship and the need for increased exchanges among us.

At this point in *(Re)Writing Craft*, I would have been content to read two more chapters that explored and explained the importance of craft criticism. While such an approach certainly could have worked for Mayers, he chose the more difficult (although more alluring) option of proposing reform. It is a difficult

shift, particularly in the wake of his provocative ideas in the preceding chapters, and there is a palpable change in energy and tone. But with Chapter Four, Mayers offers the intriguing possibility of an alliance between composition and creative writing, which is no easy peace to entreat. As is the case throughout the book, Mayers offers a clear historical context, showing us how creative writing diverged from composition's process theories in the 1960s and 1970s; more importantly, he identifies the operative terms that stand as obstacles or challenges for the joining of the two fields. He contends that an alliance will require "strategic territorial thinking" and attention to the "unconscious bias toward interpretation" that permeates English studies (104-106). At a crude, reductive level, the problem is one of perception: differences between the "naive, anti-intellectual romanticists" of creative writing and the "dull academic drones" of composition (111). Mayers is careful to describe—not fall into—such counter-productive binaries, but he outlines them clearly for anyone new to the debates or new to the discipline. Ultimately, he contends that institutional barriers pose the greatest obstacle for a new alliance under the heading of "writing studies" (114).

The final chapter, "Starting Somewhere," draws attention to itself almost as an introduction, a commencement piece that could—and perhaps will—inspire the beginning chapters of other books or the first tremors of an institutional reform movement. Mayers proposes that we create new courses, modify introductory creative writing courses, reform required composition courses, and revive writing-about-literature courses (132-53). We can do even more by altering the English curriculum as a whole and recreating the criteria by which we hire new colleagues (153-63). More broadly, the CCCC and the AWP can form a coalition, merging their common interests and, perhaps, set a goal to "wrest one of English studies' most cherished and dreaded rituals—the annual publication of job announcements and the subsequent massive job interviews at an annual convention—away from the MLA" (165). There are many other beneficial outcomes that could result from such an alliance, and, while they are not all easy, or extreme, they are all possible. And the clarity of Mayers's vision is enough to encourage us to think strategically about our own institutions and to form productive coalitions with our colleagues. It is possible, after all, to initiate changes that will not only benefit our students, but also create healthier environments where we work—and where we share our work with others. *(Re)Writing Craft* is, in many ways, the place to start. 