Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring

Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change

I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiracist Rhetoric

This trio of books focused on identity, writing center studies, and rhetoric can be summarized by the edited collection’s subtitle: “A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change.” For directors and consultants/tutors at writing centers at two-year and four-year colleges, Facing the Center and Writing Centers and the New Racism represent core texts to question current practices and imagine how writing centers can more effectively serve all student writers. While not pertaining exclusively to writing centers, I Hope I Join the Band connects to writing centers and our classrooms, where we work with students with diverse backgrounds and identities. Taken together, the three texts serve as extensions of important ideas presented in earlier works such as Nancy Maloney Grimm’s Good Intentions (1999), Elizabeth H. Boquet’s Noise from the Writing Center (2002), and Anne Ellen Geller et al.’s The Everyday Writing Center (2007). For readers who work in writing centers or for instructors who want insight into how student writers contend with their identities as they produce academic discourse, these books are essential reading. While they have different approaches, all will make readers reflect on current academic practices and consider important changes.

Harry C. Denny’s Facing the Center focuses on how students and writing center professionals approach writing tasks in light of how identity “raises questions about who we are and how we come to know and present identity as a phenomenon that’s unified, coherent, and captured in a singular essence, or as something more multi-faceted and dynamic” (2). Lamenting the fact that many writing centers are staffed by people of privilege who often work with diverse writers, Denny argues that writing centers are exemplars of the “importance of attending to identity politics and the tangible effects of political, economic, social, and cultural forces at play in and often confounding education wherever it’s practiced” (7). Pulling from his own activism and background while also synthesizing a host of sources (notably Yoshino, Kynard, Althusser, Foucault, and Bourdieu), he works through the
multiple identities that affect writing center work and writing instruction: race and ethnicity (chapter 2), class (chapter 3), sex and gender (chapter 4), and nationality (chapter 5).

One of the energizing aspects of Facing the Center is the use of five “interchapters” that present a response to each major chapter. In these sections, which might be the strongest aspect of the book, Denny has writing consultants, many of whom have worked with him, respond to his ideas so they “might push what I’m arguing or invite further dialogue with readers” (29). Though typically short, the dialogues resemble a detailed conversation on a blog—a Burkean parlor in print. Some readers might not like how Denny chose to have his words end each interchapter (having the last word), but the sections often stimulate thinking toward the more practical—what it all means when you’re working as a tutor or a teacher. In fact, Jennifer Fontanez’s section in the “Interchapter 2” provides one of the many high points of the book because her dialogue with Denny presents the assimilationist, accommodationist, and separatist stances (Matsuda and Cox 45) in writing center work: “I am in no way, shape, or form advocating for assimilation or for people to deny their roots; having a general understanding of expectations can give people the ability to move fluidly between two different worlds. For me, it has allowed me to connect with people from all identities, thus making me more accessible” (60). Although the race and gender chapters are the most developed in the text, chapter 3, “Facing Class in the Writing Center,” represents a section many readers might have anticipated for a long time, and this reader hopes further scholarship from Denny and others more comprehensively addresses his point that “what we’re presumed to do in the writing centers is to cleanse working-class students of their identities, to enable them to start reading and sounding like right-proper middle-class folks” (72).

Published a year after Denny’s Facing the Center, the edited collection of Writing Centers and the New Racism extends the conversation begun in Denny’s fine chapter 2, “Facing Race and Ethnicity in the Writing Center,” and previous works (Boquet; Geller et al.; Grimm), though as the editors note in the introduction, the book was initiated by Victor Villanueva’s address at the 2005 International Writing Centers Association Conference. The text has four sections: (1) “Foundational Theories on Racism, Rhetoric, Language, and Pedagogy”; (2) “Toward an Antiracist Praxis for Writing Centers”; (3) “Research, Critical Case Studies, and the Messiness of Practice”; and (4) “Stories of Lived Experience.” Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan hope that the book “and the conversation it represents and provokes will be challenging, even for those in our field who have long been committed to and active in antiracism work” (13). Their hope is realized because this book asks the right questions.

While all four sections feature articles worthy of any writing center professional’s time, four articles in the “Foundational Theories” and the “Re-
Laura Greenfield’s “The ‘Standard English’ Fairy Tale” makes readers think about how “[o]ur assumptions about language are guided more often by a rhetoric that feeds on our unconscious racism than they are by our intellectual understanding of linguistic fact” (34). Though her article might have been more powerful if she examined the intersections of race and class, she makes readers question the idea of academic discourse as the language of power and how “Standard English” might be more justly described as “standardized English.” In the same section, Vershawn Ashanti Young decimates cultural critic Stanley Fish’s pronouncements and diatribes about college writing instruction. In his “Should Writers Use Their Own English?” Young examines the “hegemony” of “what good writin is and how good writin can look at work, at home, and at school” (65) and then argues for “code meshing” (67) to complicate or upend how scholars advocate for code “switching.”

In the “Research” section of the book, Nancy Effinger Wilson presents a relevant case study from her own writing center and reflections as a researcher in “Bias in the Writing Center: Tutor Perceptions of African American English.” That article is smartly followed by Kathryn Valentine and Monica F. Torres’s “Diversity as Topography: The Benefits and Challenges of Cross Racial Interaction in the Writing Center.” While Effinger Wilson’s article details how tutors have a “clear bias against AAL [African American Language]” (178) and they are more charitable toward nonnative (ELL) students, Valentine and Torres’s chapter harkens to Kenneth Bruffee’s important work on collaborative learning by detailing how cross-racial interaction and collaboration leads to productive learning outcomes and can create “the cultural skills and attitudes necessary to participate and lead in a diverse democracy” (198). The three articles in the final section of the book, “Stories of Lived Experience,” provide narratives of teaching and learning that are a mixture of inspiration (Ann E. Green’s “‘The Quality of Light’: Using Narrative in a Peer Tutoring Class”), turmoil and controversy (Barbara Gordon’s “Caught in a Firestorm: A Harsh Lesson Learned Teaching AAVE”), and consciousness raising (Jason B. Esters’s “On the Edges: Black Maleness, Degrees of Racism, and Community on the Boundaries of the Writing Center”).

Although this book is one of the strongest collections of writing center–focused articles to come out in some time, some might question that the collection mainly reflects a black (African American) and white (Anglo-American) approach to race. Especially in light of the burgeoning demographic of Latinos in the United States, more comprehensive coverage of the Latino American experience and the linguistic challenges for that racial identity is warranted. In addition, although students who don’t speak English in their home communities but who have been in the United States for some time are often categorized as ESL writers, examining our work with those students is relevant to the “new racism.” However, there is only so much one edited collection can cover, and there is not a weak article in Writing Centers and the New Racism.

As Denny’s Facing the Center chal-
lenges the traditional book project on an organizational level with its experience- and theory-based reflections coupled with interchapters and while Greenfield and Rowan’s Writing Centers provides a traditional collection of articles, Frankie Condon’s I Hope I Join the Band offers an amalgam of memoir, theoretical meditation, and call to action. Written mainly for white academics, her book “digs into ways of conceiving, thinking, speaking, and acting performatively in antiracist struggles for whites” (12). As Condon says, the book is “for those who wonder how, why, and to what extent our lives as actors, as rhetors, are shaped by ideologies of race, and for those who hear the call to act: to organize and facilitate, to study, write, and teach with both will and readiness for hopeful resistance” (26).

In I Hope I Join the Band, Condon presents ways to productively examine and complicate our racial selves. Condon’s text performs in a similar manner as a literacy narrative because she leads readers through significant personal experiences and effectively connects them to concepts relevant to antiracist activism. Her multiple readings of personal experiences are the highlights of the work along with her trenchant analysis of the differences between shame and guilt (113–14). While she details the concepts of “critical ideation” (38) and “decentering” (63), for practically minded readers, the precept of “whiteness” (34) and the idea of “nuancing” (86) offer the most promise for instructors and writing center professionals. They seem the most usable concepts because tutors can use them to explore cultural “norms,” the varieties of academic discourse, and their experiences working with diverse writers. Condon argues that “whiteness impedes the ability of white folks to change, to be changed in and through our relationships with peoples of color and by the analyses they offer to us of the materiality of racism in all of our lives” (34). As Condon notes, nuancing is a practice that “engages us in critical inquiry, but it is also a reflective practice in which we examine individual and collective memory to discern the impact of an idea, concept, or belief on our lived experience of the world and on the stories we tell about that lived experience” (87).

Chapter 4, “Angels before Thee,” is one of the strongest chapters in the book because it details thoughtful ideas about both concepts and ways to enact the process of nuancing. The author provides a sample of her own nuancing in this chapter, and for that matter the whole book, through her experiences with her adopted brother, Rick. Condon argues that sharing stories is where to start when nuancing and problem solving for the “wicked problem” of racism (138). For instructors whose classrooms are racially diverse and for directors of writing centers who are committed to diversity and a fuller representation of the writing we should experience, this chapter is a must read. If there are two contentions to take away from this book, they are the following: (1) we need to reinforce and value the personal in academic writing, and (2) we need to challenge the idea that Edited American English should
be the power discourse. Both will likely provoke serious reflection and debate.

The book concludes in a similar manner to Denny’s interchapters in Facing the Center, but chapter 6, “After the Fire, a Still Small Voice,” represents a more comprehensive conversation between peers through a published exchange of letters between Condon (a white woman) and Vershawn A. Young (an African American male) about antiracist activism. Young and Condon’s exchanges provide closure to her project, and Young succinctly presents what Condon’s book interrogates and promotes: “You urge whites to take personal responsibility for racism and white privilege, showing how well-meaning, even antiracist, whites must do this, must critique their whiteness, which is not the same thing as racism, but does often have the same results” (182). I Hope I Join the Band ends on a hopeful note, and the conversation in the final chapter models discussions that instructors and writing center professionals should have.

Though Condon’s book does not focus squarely on writing centers, her status and work in writing center scholarship certainly will get this text noticed among that readership. However, her book belongs in the conversation, one that is preceded by Denny’s exciting work and Greenfield and Rowan’s trenchant Writing Centers. All three books represent excellent resources for anyone teaching in diverse, multicultural classrooms, not just those of us who work in writing centers. However, for a more comprehensive examination of identities and how they influence the work of teachers and writing center directors, Denny’s Facing the Center is the place to start.

Works Cited


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A Teaching Subject: Composition since 1966, new ed.

The title A Teaching Subject: Composition since 1966 suggests a chronological presentation of significant scholarly perspectives since 1966, and to a certain extent, the book fulfills this expectation. Yet the experience of reading feels more like sitting in a coffee shop with
a thoughtful scholar,colleague who is less interested in chronology than on reflecting on important topics associated with the emergence of composition as a discipline. Pleasantries are exchanged; coffee is served. Then the scholar,colleague begins by saying, “You know, the concept of ___ was considered important in early composition scholarship. But I have been thinking deeply about it and have often considered whether. . . .” And so the conversation unfolds, with the reader/companion frequently interrupting to exclaim, “Yes. Yes. Your point is worth considering! I have often thought so myself.”

Joseph Harris's goal in this book is not to develop a seamless history of composition studies, but rather to offer a sympathetic critique of the issues and tensions that have informed composition pedagogy. The book focuses on five concepts: Growth, Voice, Process, Error, and Community, reconsidering each through a critical lens in order to arrive at a more nuanced perspective. Chapter 1, “Growth,” begins with the 1966 Dartmouth conference, which, presumably, generated a move from a skill-based model to one of individual growth. Harris maintains that the conference probably had less impact on what actually happens in writing classrooms than it was reputed to have, although one result was an emphasis on personal and expressive writing, which Harris argues may not be in the best interest of all students.

Chapter 2, “Voice,” discusses the extent to which a writing course should focus on matters of “selfhood,” and the extent to which a real self and a real voice can be manifested in a text. Referencing the work of Donald Murray, James Moffett, and Peter Elbow, Harris examines the complexities associated with the concept, problematizing what he refers to as the “rhetoric of authenticity,” in which the measure of good writing becomes associated with its genuineness or sincerity. “How can these attributes be assessed or even discerned?” Harris asks. In chapter 3, “Process,” Harris reconsiders the work of several luminaries associated with early process scholarship, maintaining that although the process movement helped establish composition as a research field, it “has never transformed the actual teaching of writing as dramatically as advocates have claimed” (75). Moreover, he contends, in some instances, process teaching has evolved into “a new sort of formalism—one centered no longer on textual structures but instead on various algorithms, heuristics, and guidelines for composing” (76).

In chapter 4, “Error,” Harris, of course, discusses Errors and Expectations, expressing admiration for Mina Shaughnessy’s “early defense of the aims of open admissions” (105), but pointing out that in many ways the book remains, “again, after everything else is said about it, a book on teaching grammar” (107). In contrast to Shaughnessy’s work, Harris refers to the work of Geneva Smitherman and Mike Rose, who are both concerned with helping students find something meaningful to say. In chapter 5, “Community,” Harris argues
that everyone, including our students, belongs to many communities and that the concept of a stable academic discourse community constitutes an oversimplification. Perhaps, he postulates, our work might be more useful and accurate if we viewed “our task as adding to or complicating their uses of language” (140).

In a final section, “Coda 2012: From Dartmouth to New London,” Harris addresses the concept of “multiliteracies,” a term that refers not only to the increasing diversity of media but also to the recognition that “studying or teaching English no longer involves, if it ever fully did, identifying with a stable Anglo-American culture” (174). In this section, Harris endorses the idea of a “remix culture,” a rethinking of the forms of academic writing; however, he also expresses doubt that “the digital era will lead to broad shifts in cognitive styles” (174) and reaffirms the value of close reading and of teaching students to read “extended connective prose” (Hesse 2009, 605, qtd. in Harris 172).

Whether discussed in a coffee shop or a classroom, this book is certain to stimulate conversation. Some readers might question Harris’s perspective on early process and cognitive emphases and his concern about personal writing, while others might argue that there was less ideological agreement about these concepts than Harris is assuming. What also might be a concern for readers who are expecting a comprehensive historical narrative is the absence of issues that aren’t addressed, such as assessment, the abolitionist movement, or approaches to working with English Language Learners. Nevertheless, although the scope of the book is limited to particular issues, it is certain to generate lively discussion and would be an excellent choice for a professional development project among two-year college English faculty or a graduate seminar on the teaching of writing. And perhaps in a few years, maybe over another cup of coffee, Harris will reflect on composition since 2012. Based on the thoughtfulness of this book, I hope he does.

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*Language and Learning in the Digital Age*
by James Paul Gee and Elisabeth R. Hayes.

In *Language and Learning in the Digital Age*, James Paul Gee and Elisabeth R. Hayes address issues surrounding language, literacy, ideology, and pedagogy in a digital world. The book, comprised of fourteen chapters, moves from a brief history of language and literacy to specific examples of what Gee and Hayes call “passionate affinity spaces,” before moving on to discuss the need for educational restructuring. Their main point is that digital media afford people the opportunity to be active learners and producers, not simply passive consumers of education, media, news, and life.

Gee and Hayes explain ways that digital media change social relationships regarding whom we consider “strangers and intimates” (33), allowing people to engage in both roles simultaneously.
They argue that the cross-functional team aspect of massive multiplayer video games, for example, lends itself to real-life applications. The video game *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) serves as one example because it requires players to work together, understand different team members’ strengths and weaknesses, and problem-solve collaboratively. Their contention evokes Gee’s earlier work, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*, arguing that schools are not as functional or effective as what Gee and Hayes refer to as “passionate affinity spaces,” allowing “amateurs” the ability to interact, discuss, and compete with professionals because of a shared interest rather than credentials (70). Gee and Hayes provide an example of an online forum dedicated to “cat health” where people post questions, provide comments, feedback, and support, or simply lurk without ever interacting. In a space such as this, the “wisdom of the crowd” (92)—the experiences and opinions of non-experts—is valued, sometimes, above those who have credentials (e.g., veterinarians). Although digital spaces afford opportunities to connect globally, Gee and Hayes, careful not to overestimate crowdsourcing, warn that because today more text is produced than what we can consume, these spaces also can perpetuate our own affiliations, beliefs, and ideologies (130), therefore, connecting us globally while dividing us locally.

Adding to existing knowledge of complications surrounding pedagogy, Gee and Hayes address a cognitive and functional flaw with our educational system. They draw on their previous scholarship and harken to the “literacy myth” (Graff), arguing that “teaching all children to read well” does not “level the playing field” (57). Further, they discuss specific limitations among the current educational paradigm, citing “essayist literacy” and “content literacy,” school-based literacies that are reductive and acontextual instead of adaptive and applied. Unlike opportunities afforded people through digital media (e.g., *WoW*, *The Sims*, and other passionate affinity spaces) the traditional education system does not allow for authentic, applied learning.

Gee and Hayes call for a shift from an old-capitalism–based paradigm of education to a paradigm focused on “new capitalism,” creating and encouraging lifelong learners and global citizens who are innovative and flexible—what they term “passionate affinity-based learning” (69). Unlike old capitalism, which values mass production and commodities, new capitalism values design, innovation, and niche marketing as well as change, which is something standardized tests cannot and do not teach. Their point is that we ought be aware of “complex systems” beyond our own local communities and passionate affinity spaces to enact “nexus thinking and action” (142), considering variables that allow us to understand ideologies, cultures, and customs beyond our own so that, with the help of digital media, people can humanize without “homogenizing” (142).

Perhaps beyond the scope of this particular work, the text could benefit by increased attention to the disconnect between students’ abilities to access digital media and simply being literate enough to do so and their abilities to manage an overabundance of digital
media options. Student demographics in two-year colleges may be changing to include students with more digital wherewithal, but students lacking access and digital literacies still comprise a large portion of this population. Often, students in two-year colleges are precisely the demographic who might thrive in passionate affinity spaces (e.g., someone who is able to reinvent himself or herself, adapting with the ever-changing world) rather than in older, formal educational paradigms, yet they are the same students who tend to lack the time and financial ability to exist in such digital spaces.

Overall, Gee and Hayes provide an in-depth analysis of issues important to our digital culture. Once again, they find deep, relevant meaning in spaces that might be overlooked as banal. Students, teachers, media professionals, and others interested in the impact of new technologies would benefit from this insightful, timely, and accessible text that calls for pedagogical reform.

**Works Cited**


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Suman Gupta’s *Contemporary Literature: The Basics* is a new addition to Routledge’s *The Basics* series of affordable books designed to provide scholarly introduction and support to students in a variety of disciplines. Gupta is currently chair in literature and cultural history at the UK’s Open University and has authored several books on contemporary literature and globalization—most recently, *Globalization and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009). I recommend *Contemporary Literature: The Basics* as a guide for instructors seeking to expand their understanding of contemporary literature and criticism or those looking for an innovative approach to teaching. Alternately, I recommend it as a supplementary text for students.

*Contemporary Literature: The Basics* attempts to define contemporary literature and equip readers with the necessary tools to take a systematic, analytical approach to contemporary literary texts. The book can be read from beginning to end to assist in developing a consistent picture, or readers may skip through sections. Each chapter serves as a comprehensive discussion of a particular topic—analyzing literature, describing contemporary literature, the production and reception of literature, and perspectives and issues of contemporary literature. Each chapter features
a bibliography of references and suggestions for further reading. Gupta refers to several contemporary literary texts, including poetry, plays, novels and e-texts, to illustrate and clarify concepts, though it is not assumed that the reader is familiar with every text cited.

Gupta’s presentation of difficult ideas I find to be very beneficial. For example, to illustrate the difficulty inherent in the classification of literature, Gupta borrows the “notion of a Cemetery of Forgotten Books” (29) from the 2002 novel by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, _The Shadow of the Wind_. This cemetery is described as “a vast collection [of books] that is completely randomly stacked” (29). Gupta then assigns the task of sorting these “dead” books into some semblance of order. Gupta explains: “[P]utting the texts in order will in fact bring them back to life: it will be possible to find them again and the very act of putting them in order involves consulting them and arousing them from oblivion. The ordering of texts is therefore central to what the academic study of literature [...] involves” (29).

How might a librarian or student of literature approach this task? Gupta suggests several academic strategies including Mechanical Periodization, for example, the sorting of groups of texts by periods of a hundred years; or by Socially Relevant Periodization, sorting according to the content of the texts in relation to social circumstances and events. Each of these methods has problems, and Gupta illustrates the inherent slipperiness by pointing out the challenges within each of these methods. In doing so, he demonstrates just how tenuous any definition of _Contemporary Literature_ actually is, since when _contemporary_ begins will certainly be different for different groups.

Gupta’s discussion of the production of literature and the literary industry is similarly informative. This chapter explores the varying definition of The Author, invoking literary critics such as Barthes, discusses the marketing of literature and “taste-making” by the publishing industry, and the distribution and retailing of literature. Gupta also discusses live and recorded performances and their relation to, if any, literary texts and suggests a policy to determine that relevancy: “live and recorded performances are within the remit of literature and literary studies insofar as they relate in some way to written/printed texts” (73). Gupta suggests through this policy that a performance is considered contemporary even if it is a performance of a classical play or an adaptation of a classic literary work. For instance, Charlotte Brontë’s novel _Jane Eyre_ is a classic, Victorian literary text while Cary Fukunaga’s 2011 film adaptation of _Jane Eyre_ is classified as a contemporary work because it is not just based on Brontë’s text but subsequent and current interpretations of that text.

Gupta ends his book with a discussion of Perspectives and Issues that serve to define contemporary literature in useful ways. Using what he calls _supersignificative terms_, he seeks to “enable various kinds of analysis (e.g. ‘everyday life’, ‘ideology’, ‘identity’); those that refer to analytical frameworks (e.g. ‘postmodernism’, ‘post-colonialism’, ‘globalization’); and those that refer to oft-debated issues (e.g. ‘news’, ‘Human rights’, ‘environmentalism’)” (129). This section contains specific, recognizable
reviews of each of these concepts that effectively demonstrate the definition and significance of each idea so that students and teachers have a usable shared vocabulary. In this section in particular, the references and suggestions for further reading provide relevant, up-to-date materials that will assist students in their studies.

*Contemporary Literature: The Basics* is an excellent resource for students of literature interested in expanding their studies and should also prove a valuable reference for teachers of literature, particularly at the high school or undergraduate level, who are seeking an up-to-date discussion of contemporary literature and literary theory with current examples and references, including e-texts, blogs, and online communities of readers.

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*The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*

Like the cartographer, *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: A Contemporary Perspective* intends to bring clarity to the disciplinary landscape of composition studies, and in doing so the book draws attention to the ideas of Stephen North, which, the collection argues, shaped the terrain more profoundly than previously imagined. Ostensibly, the collection examines the continued import of North’s 1987 monograph *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, which, as Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt contend, “became a flashpoint for enacting disciplinary anxieties attendant to composition’s transition into a postmodernist discipline” (2). However, it soon becomes clear that while composition’s terrain has shifted, scholars continue to wrestle with North’s notion of *lore*—“the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs” of practitioners (North 22)—and its role in shaping composition theories and methodologies. The disciplinary anxiety North observed in *Making* continues to haunt the field as scholars and teachers work to determine the veracity of methodologies and approaches to teaching writing.

Composition studies, as a disciplinary field, Massey and Gebhardt rightly note, is now more complex than North could have predicted in the late 1980s. So, while it is tempting to celebrate the robust intellectual pluralism of our discipline, they caution readers that *Changing* is also intended to point out the current, precarious state of composition studies within the academy as a result of its perceived lack of methodological center.

The collection opens with a fascinating introduction from North himself. North argues *Making* received such a grand reception because it functioned as evidence for its own argument: Composition suffers from a “widely shared professional and disciplinary anxiety” because of its disparate methodologies (14); therefore, any sketch of the field must account for the various
knowledge-making practices contributing to this professional insecurity. The introduction is an erudite opening foray to which the rest of the collection responds.

Divided in four parts, the essays collected in Changing examine both the historical significance and the contemporary utility of North’s disciplinary history. Part one offers personal responses to Making from Ed White and Lynn Bloom. Bloom’s essay challenges the pertinence of North’s “map of the field.” As Bloom argues, the continued reliance on texts like North’s is, ironically, exactly the type of adherence to lore that North warned against in Making. Bloom demonstrates how composition’s continued deference to disciplinary lore inhibits the production of generative counter-histories of the field.

In part two, “Working the Field: Knowledge-Making Communities since The Making of Knowledge in Composition,” Richard Fulkerson, Kelly Pender, Victor Villanueva, and others write about the ways in which the field of composition has developed and marked out new lines of inquiry. Fulkerson’s essay is perhaps the most provocative of the section, as it pays homage to North while also raising objections to his definition of lore, suggesting instead that contemporary theories of writing complicate North’s reductive notion of experience as a knowledge-making enterprise.

Part three addresses the changing nature of undergraduate and graduate studies in composition, as well as the place of writing in the public sphere. One highlight of this section is Matthew Jackson’s essay, which uses Emmanuel Levinas’s notion of inter-subjectivity to challenge North’s view of the autonomous teaching subject, the ontological assumption underlying North’s highly critical assessment of composition teachers. Jackson’s deft criticism of Making via a Levinasian ethic of being is illustrative of composition’s continued effort to expand its theoretical canon.

The collection concludes with a series of essays examining the field’s pluralistic approach to research and scholarship. Particularly interesting is Massey’s bibliographic study on the initial critical reception of North’s Making. Through an examination of language found in book reviews of the time, Massey demonstrates how Making has always encouraged disciplinary reflexivity: What is composition studies? What are our collective research methodologies? What is composition studies’ place within the academy? These same questions, Massey concludes, continue to inform the field’s contemporary practices and guiding theories.

Ultimately, I recommend The Changing of Knowledge in Composition for teachers of writing interested in familiarizing themselves with disciplinary history. This collection is thoughtfully curated and creates an engaging conversation about the history and future of composition studies, building from North’s original statements on composition studies. It is North, however, in his afterword to the collection who identifies the most provocative element of Changing—while our theories and pedagogies may have changed, our disciplinary anxiety remains. “I was struck,” North observes, “by the catalog of threats this volume suggests composition is facing” (324).
The wonderful irony of North’s statement is that a similar catalog inspired *Making*. Upon reading *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition*, then, one is left to conclude that continual cartographic anxiety is a characteristic of composition studies’ professional ethos: We are always mapping and remapping our field, ever insecure about our latest renderings.

### Works Cited


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**Fellowships Available for CCCC**

The CCCC Tribal College Faculty Fellowship offers financial aid to selected faculty members currently working at tribally controlled colleges to attend the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), March 19–22, 2014, in Indianapolis. We are offering two Tribal College Faculty Fellowships in the amount of $750 each.

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