

dense style must limit its accessibility to a wide readership which it would otherwise deserve. Despite this reservation, I am sure that it will provide an invaluable aide to researchers and practitioners concerned with developing alternative analytical frameworks for exploring contemporary forms of educational governance.

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**JAMES F. SLEVIN & ART YOUNG (EDITORS).** *Critical Theory and the Teaching of Literature: Politics curriculum pedagogy.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), 1995. 369 pp., \$22.95. ISBN 0-8141-0963-2.

Slevin and Young's selection of essays represents what they consider "a vital exchange of views" on the issues raised at the NCTE-sponsored Summer Institutes for Teachers of Literature in 1991 and 1992. The articles selected include contributions by keynote speakers at the two conferences (Barbara Christian, Peter Elbow, Gerald Graff, Mary Louise Pratt, and Robert Scholes), additional essays which the editors describe as having been "incubated" during the conferences, and further collaborative and conversational explorations of the original ideas. The text as a whole investigates the crucial questions that several decades of literary theory and criticism have implicitly raised for academic teaching; as the contributing authors imagine – and report on – alternatives to the discipline's long history of believing "coverage" to be an appropriate pedagogical model, "the canon" an agreed-on certainty, "the professor" the exclusive agent of learning, and the classroom as a place where education is "delivered", the struggle with issues of personal and institutional politics, and with theoretical and practical implications for curriculum and pedagogy.

The text is divided into the three sections listed in the subtitle: *Politics curriculum pedagogy*, and each section includes a range of articles in a variety of styles and forms. Overall, the contributions are of very high quality, and though every exceptional essay cannot be mentioned by name, certain ones such as Mary Louise Pratt's "Daring to Dream: Re-Visioning Culture and Citizenship" and Eric Cheyfitz's "Redistribution and the Transformation of American Studies", are noteworthy for the historically-grounded and intellectually-challenging "bookends" they provide the *Politics* section of the text. Similarly, Gerald Graff's "Organizing the Conflicts in the Curriculum", an extension of his influential 1992 challenge to "teach the conflicts", and Wendy Bishop's "Attitudes and Expectations: How Theory in the Graduate Student (Teacher)

Complicates the English Curriculum” provide the *curriculum* section with a useful balance between specific suggestions for alternative organizational structures and an examination of at least one potential “site of resistance” to such alternatives. The *pedagogy* section is likewise enriched by Peter Elbow’s, “The War between Reading and Writing – and How to End It” and Kathleen McComick’s “Reading Lessons and Then Some: Toward Developing Dialogues between Critical Theory and Reading Theory”, which, especially in tandem, consider the practical and theoretical implications of a much greater emphasis on **writing** in the classroom, and the politically multiplex contexts in which writing and reading always occur.

As this survey already suggests, various of the volume’s essays evidence a lively contemporary tendency to “slip” between categories. David Bleich’s and Min-Zhan Lu’s contributions to the *Politics* section, for instance, could as appropriately have been included under *pedagogy*, since Bleich’s is a description of the unexpected gender theorizing that emerged in a graduate class made up primarily of male students, while Lu’s is an account of the sequence of assignments with which she challenges her students to explore their own implicit theoretical frameworks. Similarly, Anne Ruggles Gere and Morris Young’s essay in the *curriculum* section, which traces the political and economic influences on the publication and reception of three significant cultural texts, could equally appropriately have appeared in the *Politics* section. The Elbow and McCormick contributions described above, moreover, are excellent examples of the ambiguous straddling evident throughout the collection, between the theoretical justification of curricula and the practical requirements of the classroom.

Exceptions to the collection’s high quality of writing and thinking are infrequent enough not to necessitate specific mention. A more pressing criticism is the occasional sense that ideas are echoing and re-echoing unnecessarily, which is an impression that may result from the fact that most of the contributors are working with a pre-existing relationship to both Graff’s “teaching the conflicts” challenge and Pratt’s concept of “the contact zone”. Certainly James Phelan’s hypothetical debate, “Teaching Theorizing/Theorizing Teaching”, provides a usefully problematized perspective on Graff’s position, and Janice M. Wolff’s “Teaching in the Contact Zone: The Myth of Safe Houses” demonstrates how Pratt’s ethnographic concepts are applicable to classroom practice. Despite their unabashedly American perspective, virtually all the essays collected here are directly relevant to Canadian academic

teaching (and indeed, Pratt's description of "the polyglot citizen" could serve as a positive deal for English- and French-Canadians of all vocations and political postures), since their common feature is a powerful commitment to introducing **students** as a vital presence in a professor's reflections on critical theory. Certainly, from Keith Hjortshoj's candid description of his mistaken assumptions about a composition student's ability to James E. Seitz's provocative account of the pleasures of student-writing, these essays describe wise, energetic, and committed responses to the challenges that critical and literary theory pose for academic teaching throughout North America.

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HENRY A. HUBERT. *Harmonious Perfection: The development of English studies in nineteenth-century anglo-Canadian colleges*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1994. 215 pp. \$28.00 (Cloth). ISBN 0-87013-342-X.

At the time of its publication in 1983, James Berlin's *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* was, as Donald Stewart aptly noted in the foreword, one of an "astonishingly small list of works of serious scholarship" that offered composition teachers a sense of their discipline's history. Before Berlin, it must have seemed even to writing teachers as though the role of university English" was primarily and preeminently the study of literature (especially the canon). Who, after all, would argue that the main concern of English departments should be rhetoric – or *want* to teach it – when rhetoric, reduced to "Freshman Comp," amounted to little more than dull "themes" of reluctant writers? But Berlin made clear that it had not always been thus, even in America. Steeped in knowledge of classical rhetoric, alert to the ways in which socio-economic conditions and epistemological assumptions shape pedagogy, Berlin made a convincing case that Freshman Comp was only a dark night in the rhetorician's soul – the result of pressure from a professionalizing middle class, the product of an assembly line philosophy of education, the "triumph of the scientific and technical world view." This historical perspective gave writing teachers a fresh sense of possibilities.

*Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* is a hard act to follow. Nonetheless, it is Berlin's study with which Henry Hubert's *Harmonious Perfection: The development of English studies in nineteenth-century anglo-Canadian colleges* will inevitably be compared – at least among compositionists and teachers of rhetoric, who seem to me his