

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

main audience. The obvious reason for this comparison is that Hubert, like Berlin, has written the first book-length history of post-secondary writing instruction in his country. But the books are also similar in more subtle respects; though *Harmonious Perfection* is, in name and in substance, concerned as much with the teaching of English literature as it is with instruction in rhetoric and composition, the author is not an "English prof" but a "writing teacher" (the names tell us much about how each profession sees itself). As a result, his angle of vision is in many ways similar to Berlin's.

Hubert's thesis is that English studies in Canada emerged from contrasting educational philosophies, both imported from overseas. Early in the nineteenth century, the idealistic English philosophy stressed a classical, liberal education for an elite student body; the more practical Scottish philosophy stressed utility in education, drew on a strong tradition of teaching rhetoric, and opened its doors to a much wider range of students. The incompatibility of these philosophies presented few problems for a nation building from the ground up; in Canada, the Scots and the English simply established their separate Presbyterian and Anglican colleges, the one emphasizing composition and vernacular speech, the other training students to read and translate classical authors. But towards the middle of the century, universities became secularized. The emphasis changed from "transmitting Christian values" to "educating critical minds" and searching for "an alternative to the Christian tradition." Whole institutions were handed over to secular authorities. At the same time, interest in national literatures was increasing throughout Great Britain. The resulting "literacy-cultural orientation" determined the focus of English studies in Canada right up to the middle of the twentieth century. By the late 1880s, Canada's version of the age-old battle between poetics and rhetoric was over: "English lit" was in; rhetoric and composition were most definitely out.

Hubert, like Berlin, openly regrets the loss of the rhetorical tradition. Occasionally, in detailing the territorial struggles between rhetoric and poetics in Anglo-Canadian colleges, he laments "the jealous influence of English literature." On the whole, however, his perspective seems unbiased, and his treatment of the contending forces fairly balanced. Less satisfying is the style of Hubert's book, which at times reads like a doctoral dissertation. Clearly, a great deal of good research has gone into *Harmonious Perfection*, but one wishes the author had used it to better effect. On the rare occasions when Hubert enlivens his narrative with a telling anecdote or quotation ("When a man gets into literary

criticism at large," said Alexander Bain, "the temptation to deviate into matters that have no value for the predominating end of a teacher of English, is far beyond the lure of alcohol, tobacco, or any sensual stimulation.), one is reminded of all that the book might have been. Unfortunately, the people and pedagogies central to Hubert's history remain dry and all too distant.

That said, *Harmonious Perfection* is still a valuable contribution to studies in both English and rhetoric, one that fills a significant gap in our historical knowledge of post-secondary education in Canada. Yet important gaps in our knowledge remain, since the book's narrative takes us only to the edge of western Canada and the turn of the twentieth century. It is to be hoped that Hubert will now go on, as Berlin did in *Rhetoric and Reality*, to examine how educational developments in his nation's formative years played themselves out in the century following.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

The following is a list of books received by MCGILL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION / REVUE DES SCIENCES DE L'ÉDUCATION DE MCGILL. Not all the books received can be reviewed; however, reviews of some of these books may appear in this issue or in future issues. We wish to thank all of the publishers who have sent us review copies.

Booth, David & Reczuch, Karen. (1996). *The dust bowl*. (Ages 4-9). Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press (Tele: 416 925-5437; Fax 416 960-5437). 32 pp. Hard cover \$16.95. ISBN 1-55074-295-7.

Carroll, Michael Thomas (Ed.). (1996). *No small world: Visions and revisions of world literature*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English (Tele: 217 328-3870; Fax: 217 328-0977). 211 pp. \$19.95 (NCTE members \$14.95). ISBN 0-8141-3368-1.

Davis, Aubrey. (1996). *Sody Salleratus*. (Ages 3-7). Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press (Tele: 416 925-5437; Fax 416 960-5437). 32 pp. Hard cover \$14.95. ISBN 1-55074-281-7.

Edwards, Richard, Hanson, Ann, & Raggatt, Peter (Eds.). (1996). *Boundaries of adult learning*. New York. Routledge (Tele: 212 244-3336; Fax: 212 564-7854). 303 pp. \$22.95. ISBN 0-415-13614-8.