

REVIEWS

From the Review Editor's Desk

With this issue of *JTW*, we begin presenting short reviews, in the 600- to 1,000-word range. With *JTW's* range of readers, writing teachers throughout the curriculum and those who teach writing outside schools, I wanted to provide timely access to new work.

This group of ten reviews includes elements of a very wide community of writers and writing teachers. With Joan Livingston-Webber's review of Brett Elizabeth Blake's *She Say, He Say: Urban Girls Write Their Lives*, we hear middle school girls in a large city's public schools. With Mark Wiley's review of Helen Dale's *Co-Authoring the Classroom: Creating an Environment for Effective Collaboration*, we focus on high school English with an emphasis on co-authoring beyond peer reading groups. Thomas Morrissey provides perspective on the writing-across-the-curriculum movement in his review of the Walvoord, Hunt, Dowling, and McMahon book *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing-Across-The-Curriculum Programs*. Joanne Addison's review of Jane Maher's biography of Mina Shaughnessy and Suzanne Bordelon's review of the Stewarts' biography of historical figure Fred Newton Scott reveal in our own area some of the emphasis on biography occurring in publishing more widely. With this issue, we also feature a new line emerging from Utah State University Press: our reviews include Sean Williams on Laurel Johnson Black's study of conferencing, Dennis Young on Wendy Bishop's collected essays, and Will Hochman on Joan Tornow's

ethnographic study of computers and writing. Finally, reminders that teachers of writing practice in communities outside school are Pat McQueeney's review of Haines-Newcomer-Raphael's *Writing Together: How to Transform Your Writing in a Writing Group* and Lynn Briggs's review of the Foehr and Schiller collection, *The Spiritual Side of Writing: Releasing the Learner's Whole Potential*.

These shorter reviews will become a part of each issue of *JTW*, even when a longer review-essay appears in the issue. In the shorter reviews, we'll look at books on teaching writing in elementary and middle schools, books on cross-grade literacy tutoring and early writing, and new work from several presses. Upcoming review essays feature a review of books often used in teacher training courses focused on the teaching of writing and a review of several books in the Modern Language Association's series on composition.

—Gail Stygall

Brett Elizabeth Blake. *She Say, He Say: Urban Girls Write Their Lives*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

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She Say, He Say is an ethnographic study of "voices on the edge of adolescence" (134), in particular, of the voices of eleven poor, urban, pre-adolescent fifth-grade girls from a Chicago elementary school in 1992–93.

Brett Blake has done a great service in this study. She has, first of all, provided a model of how to write a qualitative investigation—how to organize the necessary explanation and the

thick description and narrative for readers. She makes careful use of two appendices: Appendix A (“Approach and Methodology”) presents the background of the ethnographic and feminist canons that inform the study; Appendix B (“The Ethics of ‘Doing’ Ethnographic Research”) deals with ethics, among which are the issues raised by the presence of a white, middle-class researcher among the girls of the study.

Blake has, secondly, provided real insights into the dynamics of relationships among literacy, schooling, and the development and perception of public and private voices for the girls involved. The teacher of this fifth-grade class had just instituted a comprehensive revision of his classroom, organizing it almost wholly as a locus of reading and writing—with subjects of study subsumed within acts of literacy. He had instituted a Writing Workshop with an Author’s Chair, from which writers read their work aloud and solicited feedback from peers.

As the school year progressed, the girls extinguished their already meager participation in Author’s Chair—and in other activities requiring them to make their work public. Blake then organized girls’ sessions in the hallway, two sessions each week in order to include all of the girls since they were being taken out of class for so many special programs. From these sessions, Blake develops the most interesting of the insights of the study. She explores themes of the girls’ private and public writing (sexuality, domesticity, and violence) and their ability to speak in the voices of public and private address. Most startling here – though it is one of those things we already know—is the impact of violence on the girls’ literacy, both in abstract and in very fundamental ways. More than one of the girls had already been told by her father that she would not be permitted to go to high school because of the dangers involved.

Local violence provided the content of some writing, and local violence required each girl to adopt a perspective toward it. The

chapter “Gang Violence” reveals how common violence is in the girls’ lives. One girl said, “There was a fight with gangsters and they were doing shots and my brother they shot him and he was in the hospital and they took the bullet out” (102). The same girl’s best friend had been killed, “shot in her heart,” the previous year when she was ten years old (101). This girl is one whose mother has told her she won’t be going to high school. Her mother wants to return the family to Puerto Rico where it is safer.

Blake is explicit about how boys’ responses figured into the girls’ development of voice. One example in “Ignoring and Rationalizing Violence” deals with the girls’ responses to a piece two boys read aloud to the class from the Author’s chair. The class heard the following fifth-graders’ versions of the activities of twenty-one-year-old men:

so we left to our car and got some guns then we waited in it till they came, a old ladie came out of the alley and they raipt her and killed her and killed her, so I went over and they throw the old ladie in a garbage can . . . then we went to our limo and we went to pack up the babes . . . and we went to sleep with them in the badroom [sic]. 96

She is also explicit about the necessity of teaching boys and girls critical response—to each other and to surrounding events that would control them all. Such events include local violence. Such events also include the expectations of the students’ own teachers, the expectations of students and teachers in other buildings, and the expectations of residents of other parts of the city.

In the girls-only sessions, through their writing and in talk, and as evidenced by their writing, some of the girls were able to develop a perspective toward violence—a perspective beyond silence, a perspective beyond their own sometimes violent voices. Blake is not a romantic rhapsodizing about the liberating effects of

literacy or schooling. She shares with us how these eleven fifth-grade girls used literacy as an important tool in creating voices for themselves in regard to the events woven into the fabric of their lives. She does so in a way that demonstrates the value and the usefulness of qualitative research. Blake observes voices emerging later in the year: one girl wrote about animal rights (103); another girl wrote about finding “two hundred dollars in the street,” giving it to a poor woman, bringing her food, and later taking her home to “eat and take a bath and change” (104). These peaceful activist voices sound to me decidedly incapable of responding to the violence they had talked about earlier. They aren’t really meant to. They are voices, in a way, in practice; they are voices for nurturing into strength. I’m such a cynic that I find it hard to find any sign that I should hope for these girls and others in similar circumstances, in this clearly fictional story of compassion for a poor old lady. But there it is.

Who should read this book? Anyone looking for good models of the writing of qualitative research should read it—graduate classes in research methods, for example. Anyone who cares about poor girls, cares about schools and literacy, fears for the future of girls in this society, or fears for this society should read it. Anyone who wonders how to deal with the violent voices affected by some prepubescent boys in this society should read it. Educators at all levels would gain from reading this important study. Someone who is teaching this age group, especially someone teaching them in city-center schools, should find as much inspiration as insight.

Laurel Johnson Black. *Between Talk and Teaching: Reconsidering the Writing Conference*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1998.

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In a recent writing assignment, I asked my students to write about global warming. One student came to my office and presented a paper to me that was in obvious need of further development. I asked her what she knew about the potential impacts of continued warming, such as flooding and an extended malaria zone. Also, since her sources were relatively limited in perspective, I asked her to consider the possibility that global warming could be viewed as a positive thing, since growing seasons would increase and, therefore, world hunger might be reduced. Although the draft she brought to my office spoke mostly about greenhouse gases, when I received her final paper, greenhouse gases had been replaced by a dissonant group of paragraphs on flooding, malaria, growing seasons, and world hunger. I was shocked, not so much by the quality of the paper, but by the fact that this student had abandoned so easily her interpretation of the issue in favor of mine. What's worse, I had encouraged it.

It is exactly this type of unintentional, inequitable distribution of power in conferencing that Laurel Johnson Black examines in *Between Talk and Teaching: Reconsidering the Writing Conference*. Her argument hinges on a well-supported demonstration that conferencing is a unique speech genre (following Bakhtin) that demonstrates some of the characteristics of conversation and some of the characteristics of classroom talk, but actually lies somewhere between. The language of

conferencing, therefore, needs to be critically examined on its own terms. For her analysis of conferencing, Black draws on sociolinguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis which suggest that “the structures of our society—our relationships to one another—are revealed in our language interactions, or just as importantly, in our lack of interaction” (7).

Black has two main purposes. Her first goal is using critical discourse analysis to examine a number of conferences recorded at her institution to reveal the ways that power functions in conferences. In her second chapter, for example, Black examines the teacher-student dynamic, concluding that in “sheer volume, talk is distributed in a radically uneven manner, one which clearly falls along the lines of status, generally reproducing in the conference the kind of teacher control that characterizes most classrooms” (42). In her important third chapter on gender and conferencing, a subject she correctly notes has been viewed as marginal in conferencing scholarship, Black concludes that patterns of control and gender are closely and complexly intertwined because “just as we learn that we need to speak in particular ways to parents or peers to get certain responses and results, in our many years of schooling we learn patterns of speech that are ‘appropriate’ to gendered academic interactions and are designed to elicit the responses we want” (67).

Black’s second goal is arguing that classrooms and conferences are closely interconnected and that conferencing strategies, therefore, need to be as available for critical examination as our classroom practices. She claims, for example, that conferences should not be scheduled because a teacher needs to repair some deficiency of the classroom. They should, instead, work synergistically with classroom instruction to help students develop critical literacy skills. In other words, “[i]n the classroom and in the conference, we must use our power to ‘authorize’ speech to forward student goals” (155), to help them develop the

understanding necessary to denaturalize the workings of power structures, to draw attention to those structures and challenge them if they desire to do so. And the only effective way to teach students to critically examine the world around them is for us as teachers to become critical thinkers by denaturalizing and examining one of our own long-sublimated practices—the writing conference.

Black's book fills a need in writing scholarship exactly because of this call for teachers to examine their conferencing practices and the way that those conferences combine with classroom instruction. Indeed, excluding some research in Writing Center theory, Black's observations that "[o]ur understanding and conception of writing conferences . . . has remained, beneath the surface, fundamentally untouched by the changes in writing instruction" (13) rings embarrassingly true, since mainstream composition research has been characterized by the self-reflexivity of social constructivist theories for many years.

Between Talk and Teaching is valuable, however, not only for the theoretical challenges it poses, but also for the inclusion in each chapter of practical pedagogical advice on how to build critical discourse analysis (the study of power in discourse) into a writing curriculum. Black suggests that students need to experience research and could, therefore, listen to tapes of conferences, count important features, and then offer interpretations of the data as researchers do. Students could also investigate the differences among conferences, conversations, and classroom speech: How do questions get asked? How do topics shift, and who ratifies the topics? Examining course syllabi is another practical technique Black discusses to help students understand that their subjectivities as students are constructed by the types of assignments teachers give, by what knowledge teachers expect students to have, and by the disjunctions between

the students' expectations of a course and those set by the instructor.

Finally, as Black notes in her final chapter, "Possibilities," only if we possess such critical awareness of our own practices, and only if it is built into our teaching, will we be able to ask the most important questions of the book: "What would happen if students learned to challenge assumptions? To offer a conversational gambit? To answer questions with questions? To draw attention to power structures and challenge them?" It is possible that our students will speak their own words.

Helen Dale. *Co-Authoring the Classroom: Creating an Environment for Effective Collaboration*. Theory and Research into Practice Series. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.

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I am sure others have observed that the further one goes in education the more resistant both teachers and students are to the idea of collaboration. This resistance is especially true at postsecondary levels, where calls for more socially active forms of learning have consistently been made for a couple of decades. While the workplace increasingly uses teamwork to accomplish complex multidimensional projects, academia generally remains loyal to an individualist culture where its primary workers labor in isolation, and their products reflect individual effort. Helen Dale's book challenges the individualist orthodoxy and reminds us that the new literacy is thoroughly social with individuals forming networks that are themselves parts of larger enterprises engaged in ongoing projects. While Dale's brief book will not topple the

individualist's citadel, it will help break up a few of its aging bricks.

Dale's topic is co-authoring, or collaborative writing, which is a distinct mode of collaborative learning. Her clearly written monograph argues that the real benefits of collaborative writing are often not fully realized because collaboration usually is practiced as peer response groups or as peer editing. Yet co-authoring forces students to interact more intensely and responsibly than other typical modes of collaboration. Dale defines *co-authoring* as "meaningful interaction and shared decision making and responsibility between group members in the writing of a shared document" (x). Students share all decisions related to the final product from initial topic selection to planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The benefits of this thoroughly social writing process are that students externalize their thinking and that they must defend the "writerly" choices they make. In co-authoring groups, students become real audiences for one another and, therefore, in sometimes dramatic fashion they see how their individual writing strategies are influenced by the social context.

Dale's monograph is divided into three parts. In the fourteen pages comprising part one, she surveys theories and research supporting collaborative learning generally and co-authoring specifically. Readers familiar with this work will not learn much that is new. Dale competently synthesizes material from Vygotsky and Bakhtin and then considers work in cooperative learning, the connection between verbalization and thinking, and the benefits of cognitive conflict. Dale also includes research on strategic thinking, planning and revising, differences between expert and novice writers (Linda Flower figures prominently here), and finally co-authoring, notably Lunsford and Ede's work.

Dales' text is for classroom teachers, practitioners who are looking for effective and informed ways of teaching and responding to student writing. Although the book is advertised as

appropriate for high school and college teachers, it seems to me that what she says is adaptable to any grade level. In the introduction, Dale tells us how she used to assign weekly writing to her 125 high school students. Sheer survival led her to assign an occasional group paper to collaborative writing groups of three students. Her initial guilt caused by believing she was not working hard enough (must writing teachers base self worth on how hard they work?) was eventually assuaged by evidence that her students were really acquiring the important knowledge and concomitant skills of writing she desired they learn when teaching in the traditional individualist mode. Moreover, when Dale conducted her own research in a ninth-grade class to demonstrate this learning, she became a practitioner-scholar, a teacher devoted to her students' learning and a researcher engaged in inquiry so that it feeds back into the loop of her own learning and continual improvement.

I like the author who emerges in these ninety-some pages of text. She is congenial, and she practices what she preaches by projecting the ethos of the helpful colleague, an equal who invites us readers to try co-authoring with her, not by prescription but by using her experience (and mistakes) both to encourage and to help us think about how we might adapt her approach. In part two, the main section (pages 15–59), Dale provides us with all the specifics of how she practices co-authoring. She describes how teachers must accept a different role from the traditional authoritarian one and how they must prepare their students to play new roles as learners and experts. Dale explains how she groups students heterogeneously but advises that teachers should not make the mistake of engineering groups so that some students are perceived as representatives (really tokens) of a particular social class or ethnicity. Dale also insists that students be grouped according to special talents that they might bring to the writing task. A student who has a knack for writing catchy introductions, another student

who is a good editor, and a third who writes great descriptions make a strong threesome. Dale describes what happens in these groups and what factors affect them both positively and negatively. And, the toughest part of all for many teachers—she explains how she evaluates and grades each student based upon both individual contributions and on achievements as co-authors.

In part three of *Co-Authoring in the Classroom* (pages 61–91) Dale includes a series of appendices with sample prompts for writing assignments. One offered in great detail describes a series of activities for gathering research in the library, and another describes a case study in which students research an issue for a fictional state legislator. Perhaps most helpful in these appendices are the evaluation sheets students complete as they judge their own and their co-authors' contributions.

The problem I have encountered in co-authoring, shared by other teachers, I'm sure, includes selecting group members, dealing with personality conflicts, assuring equitable distribution of work, and establishing a fair grading system. I am generally satisfied with what Dale recommends regarding how to handle conflicts. Students are taught that debate over ideas is beneficial, while personality conflicts are destructive. Trust is the essential key to group productivity and success. In terms of distributing the workload, students must take turns in playing the role of "primary writer," the one who will make sure that a draft gets done and that copies are made for review. Still, I am not satisfied with Dale's discussion of how group members are selected and graded. Dale assumes each student will have some talent to contribute, but what if this just isn't the case? Perhaps some inexperienced writers, at least initially, need continual guidance before they can really contribute. Won't this lead to an inequity in the distribution of work? And at evaluation time, how does the teacher determine the grade for the individual student, as well as for the final product, when the inexperienced member says honestly that she did her

best but really did not contribute much because she just didn't know what to do—a self-evaluation corroborated by her two co-authors?

Although there is no ultimate answer to this question, I would like to have seen Dale handle it more extensively than she has. On the other hand, she convinced me to try more experimenting with co-authoring, supporting students who may already be engaged in informal co-authoring groups in the writing center, with peers outside of class, with family and friends, and with their colleagues in the dormitories. Considering our constant suggestions for revision as our students draft and re-draft, we as teachers are co-authoring with our students. Why not support such co-authoring in multiple contexts?

Jane Maher. *Mina P. Shaughnessy: Her Life and Her Work*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997.

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After reading Jane Maher's book, *Mina P. Shaughnessy: Her Life and Work*, I immediately flipped back through it to look at the pictures. I suppose that I wanted to see the beauty and eloquence of Mina Shaughnessy that so many people had commented on throughout her academic career. But mostly I wanted to look again at these pictures to see the dedication and commitment that this woman brought to her work. As someone who knows of Shaughnessy only through her published writing and legendary acclaim, I found Maher's account of her life and work both complex and inspiring: it tells the history of a South Dakota miner's daughter and her rise to academic prominence.

The increasing number of autobiographies and biographies written by and about members of our field is important, because they help to legitimize the value of our discipline. They do so by providing a complex view of the work of writing teachers and administrators of writing programs. Maher's biography is well researched. It includes both personal and academic correspondences between Shaughnessy and family, colleagues, administrators, and others. Also included are interviews with her brother, friends, co-workers at City College, and colleagues at NCTE, as well as excerpts from speeches and published research. Some of the details of Shaughnessy's early life become a bit overwhelming at times, and a few of Maher's interpretations of letters and events seem unsubstantiated. In general, however, the details of her life are presented in such a way that by the time you read the tributes given to Shaughnessy after her death, you understand the depth of emotion, awe, and gratitude that they contain.

Through Maher's telling of Shaughnessy's life, we come to know a little bit more about this remarkable woman and abstract an educational era marked by the struggle for open admissions. Shaughnessy attended Northwestern University in Chicago, where she majored in speech, thus laying the groundwork for her brief acting career and, ultimately, her overwhelmingly persuasive presence when she spoke about open admissions and basic writers. We see Shaughnessy's life unfold as she becomes an aspiring actress in New York, returns to school to obtain an M.A. in literature from Columbia University, and then holds a number of different jobs before being offered a full-time teaching position at Hofstra University. Three years later, Shaughnessy begins teaching full-time at City College, when she becomes fully involved with and committed to open admissions. Despite resistance on many fronts, and before her early death from cancer, Shaughnessy

becomes an associate dean and Director of the Instructional Resource Center of the City University of New York.

Maher's book reminds us that Shaughnessy was more than just a proponent of the area of study now narrowly defined as basic writing. Mina Shaughnessy also taught us about the relationship between open admissions and democracy as she enjoined us to view the teaching of open admission students as one of the most important things we can do to provide democratic educational experiences for all students. At a time when the value and cost of open admissions continues to be challenged, especially within the state of New York, this biography of Mina Shaughnessy's life and work can help us remember the importance of teaching writing to all those who would be students. As Shaughnessy wrote in "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing": "The work is waiting for us DIVING IN is simply deciding that teaching them [open admissions students] to write well is not only suitable but challenging work for those who would be teachers and scholars in a democracy." This is not only suitable and challenging work within a democracy, but work necessary for the future of our democracy. Maher's book is valuable not only for college-level basic writing teachers, but for all teachers who work to offer equal educational opportunities to their students.

Dawn Denham Haines, Susan Newcomer, and Jacqueline Raphael. *Writing Together: How to Transform Your Writing in a Writing Group*. New York: Perigee, 1997.

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Perhaps the strongest testimony that I can offer for *Writing Together: How to Transform Your Writing in a Writing Group* is

that, while in the process of reading it for this review, I recommended the book to people with widely differing needs. My free-lancer friend found something to stimulate her creative juices; a faculty colleague learned collaborative strategies for his class; a novice novelist discovered resources to inspire her; a leader learned ways to organize her group; and a writing-center staff member acquired new ideas for initiating a creative writing group. This guide by Dawn Denham Haines, Susan Newcomer, and Jacqueline Raphael, three veteran writing-group members and consultants, is valuable not only for members of writing groups, but for teachers of writing as well.

In fairness, I must disclose that I've never been a member of a writing group, nor am I a creative writer. But as a survivor of a dissertation support group run amok, I have an intimate knowledge of the importance of effective group dynamics. And I am a writing consultant who recognizes the value of collaboration, process writing, and peer feedback for students, teachers, and writing support personnel. *Writing Together* serves all these audiences because it is more than a discussion of how to critique writing in a group setting. Although the book includes very effective critiquing strategies, its emphasis is on the collective energy, or "synergy" (23), that can emerge through writing in a group when group members are serious writers.

This is a personal accounting. The authors are themselves members of the group whose experiences and writings fill the pages of *Writing Together*. The narrative of group development is about their own group, the examples of writing-in-progress that dot the book were written by their members, and drafts of the book manuscript received the group's critique. As the authors focus on the *process* of becoming writers as well as on the *products* that emerge from members' writing attempts (38), they share with readers drafts of members' fiction, nonfiction, and poetry as well as commentary on the impact of the process of

writing on themselves as emerging writers. We readers become interlopers at the group's sessions. We also benefit from the authors' discussion of how this unique approach to group work allows each member to develop a "better understanding of her writing self" (7) and to "be inspired by one another" (36) as each hones her writing craft.

Some readers will value this book for its narrative of mutual enrichment. Others will come to it for its reference value as a book on collaboration and writing strategies. Chapter One answers "why a writing group?" by presenting an overview of this group as a way of advocating the benefits of process-focused collective work. The second chapter, "Writing Together: The Transformation," lays out a theoretical argument for the benefits of collective writing to the writer as well as the writing. With Chapter Three, "Getting Started," the guidebook offers "how-to's" about forming a group and structuring initial meetings. "Writing Prompts," the fourth chapter, includes suggestions for and illustrations of ways to stimulate writing. Chapter Five focuses on group process—talking about, listening to, and critiquing writing. And for the times when group processes wane, Chapter Six explores how to maintain a group for the long term. The final chapter promotes writing beyond the group. *Writing Together* concludes with a "Guide to Group Exercises," a compilation of the writing activities incorporated throughout the book, and a bibliography of "Good Books for Writers."

The suggestions on selecting and developing a group prompted an "if only" moment. I reflected on how useful this information would have been for the dissertation support group I was involved in for two years. Lacking a meeting-management strategy in the initial sessions, our gathering devolved into what our "Brit" member called "conversation and crumpets." We collapsed (even as we gained pounds), in part, because the structure we imposed on ourselves to compensate for our initial foundering was

unyielding to individuals' changed circumstances. Had we had a template for the early meetings of the sort this book provides (52–60), we might have developed mutually agreeable group dynamics sooner. And, as our two founders graduated, our group might not have atrophied had we used strategies for adapting to change recounted in this book (146–81). The final chapter, “Articles of Faith: The Writing Life Beyond the Writing Group,” is a necessary complement to the initial chapter, for there is danger in finding too much comfort and support in a group. Ultimately, the serious writer must expand to a broader audience. This chapter helps make that transition. For the reader whose environment or temperament causes her to compose in solitude, this chapter demonstrates ways to adapt the book's strategies to her individual efforts.

Writing Together provides an in-depth exploration of writing *together* from a very personal yet broadly applicable perspective. Writers can learn the value of group work and ways to go about working collaboratively. Secondary and college teachers can use the book for the same purpose, as well as to teach effective interpersonal communication and conflict management. *Writing Together* does justice to *writing* as well, presenting process writing as a means to achieve effective discourse and self-awareness. The chapter on writing prompts, often with example responses (65–119), and the accompanying list of prompts that occur throughout the book (201–02) are writing-teacher manna. So are the guidelines for critiquing with sensitivity and effectiveness (126–31) and the “Good Books for Writers” bibliography (203–14). “These [bibliography entries] are our personal favorites,” the writers confess. This is a collection of “books that have opened our eyes to other writers’ experiences, guided and instructed us in our writing, and uplifted us when we needed inspiration” (203). This list of books that inform these serious writers is a fruitful resource for teachers, who can use it to

emphasize to students the reading-writing connection and the process by which writers develop their craft. And, this book invites teachers to do something else as well: *Writing Together* is an invitation to teachers of writing to join a group in order to gain a “better understanding of [their] writing sel[ves]” and further teach their students not only the writing process, but the process of their becoming serious writers as well.

**Wendy Bishop. *Teaching Lives: Essays and Stories*.
Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997.**

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Wendy Bishop’s *Teaching Lives* is a collage of essays (some previously published) on teaching reading and writing, researching, and being a composition teacher in the institutional setting. Although Bishop writes primarily for college composition teachers, some of the essays, especially the hands-on, practical ones, are worthwhile reading for any English teacher. Through this generative text, experienced teachers who read it seriously are likely to (re)generate new ideas about their teaching; it will help new writing teachers navigate their way through classrooms, departments, and universities. Bishop includes enough “how-to” essays supplemented with sophisticated theoretical analyses to make this book a “keeper,” one that you might want to have at hand when you prepare for next semester or when you experience the inertia of a current semester.

The collection consists of six parts, each beginning with the phrase “Composing Ourselves . . .” Writing/reading pedagogy, writing program administration, writing centers, and creative writing and composition research (among other things) are

discussed, all refracted through the multifaceted prism of Bishop's imaginative life. Given the range of topics, the book should have wide-ranging appeal, in part because of Bishop's engaging style and encompassing perspective. Tracing the "trajectory" of a life as "student writer, writing teacher, aspiring professional researcher, teacher-researcher," Bishop always brings her work back to the classroom, sharing here what she has managed over time to "quilt together" (318).

Weaving together the "personal" and the "academic," the "private" and the "public"—and seriously questioning these categories—proves to be a rewarding strategy. Bishop carefully maintains a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" perspective, best realized in her essay response to the notorious Bartholomae/Elbow debate. "It's crucial for the researcher to make professional goals personal goals, to merge extrinsic and intrinsic motivation" (213). The range of voices and insights in this book is stunning and memorable, affording a glimpse into the mind (and life) of a dedicated teacher over an approximately ten-year period. True to Bishop's stated values, student voices are everywhere taken seriously. She refers to student writing and actual classrooms in one essay; in another she turns reflective and meditative; in still another she voices theoretical concerns. Writing from the perspective of teacher, administrator, poet, researcher, daughter, mother, and colleague, Bishop offers a telling glimpse into the profession as a whole. Throughout, the argument being made "rests on personal testimony" (121).

In English departments, where (as Robert Scholes points out) creative writing is "pseudo-literature" and composition classes produce "pseudo-non-literature," where the hierarchy is balanced heavily in favor of theory-minded literature professors, Bishop finds a way to navigate the maze of troubling academic terrain. I'm struck by Bishop's attempt to create intellectual and psychological space: her *intimate space* as a teacher, writer, researcher, and

administrator. She locates a place to feel at home in an often unsettled, conflicted, and resistant—at times hostile—academic environment. “For me, the writing class has such unique space potential. How to fill it, each and every one of us who teachwrites and writeteaches, is always worth examining” (303). She tries to find her ground, to *found* her identity as a professional. And her story is, in a sense, *our* story as workers in the field.

In part, Bishop creates intimate space (for herself and us) through poetic use of language, relying on resonating metaphors to gain access to the field, finding in metaphors more than linguistic embellishment. “We can continue to try on various metaphors” (164), she says, referring in particular to attempts to define the writing center; “we need to think in terms of metaphors plural, not metaphors either/or” (160). The same may be said for nearly every aspect of composition pedagogy and administration. The metaphors we employ to envision and make sense of our work are “lenses of power on a microscope that we can flip through to try to focus in on an image of what it is we experience in thought or practice” (163). Our metaphors constitute *images* of teaching and learning writing: They are images we live and teach by, imaginal worlds we create that shape our perspective. Bishop sees teaching as journey; a place to grow; a space for healing, centering, and therapy; a uniting of heart and brain; a visionary and spiritual process. She insists that how we see is as crucial as what we see, that the way we tell the stories of our teaching—and learning—lives is the way we form our teaching. The book as a whole might be called a literacy autobiography, the story of a teacher and student of composition.

As autobiography, the book insists that as teachers we do have many lives and multiple identities. Each identity—graduate student, literary critic, composition theorist, feminist, poet, WPA—has another rhetorical frame; each has boundaries and territories that are fluid and complex. “I started to realize I wasn’t

choosing one outfit or another, but wearing them all in layers, different sides out for different occasions/situations Identity is investigated by paying attention to patterns, themes and metaphors” (120–21). The title, we quickly realize, refers to the lives of students and the teaching lives of Bishop herself, implying that the multiple identities all teachers assume in their day-to-day and year-to-year activities make up one’s self. “The longer I teach, the more clearly I realize, my own and my students’ lives are really at the center of what I do By attending to my teaching, tracing and understanding my teaching life, I understand my life, period” (316). The last line of the book says it simply, elegantly: “I relearn my life as my students explore theirs” (320). These lives are the result of reflective self- and re-construction. And lives are represented by rewriting “the story of learning and teaching . . . as I’m trying to do here” (246).

Teaching Lives then constitutes acts of attention to the teaching life, an enormously complex process:

A teaching life is a complicated creation. To understand writing, I had to teach myself about reading. To enter the profession of composition, I had to understand very different cultures and communities I had to consider relations within English departments and across the university. I had to negotiate administrative positions It helped to learn that I grew a space for teaching by becoming a good administrator, and I became a better administrator by studying what I did in that position. Learning the history of writing programs, researching administrative and teaching issues, returned me full-circle to the individual teacher and her or his writing classroom. (x)

Bishop’s book may stand as what Kenneth Burke called a “representative anecdote” of the life of a dedicated writing teacher.

We often learn best through demonstration and example. The web of identity represented here is well worth considering by teachers of English who wish to (re)shape themselves and (re)create their teaching lives.

Joan Tornow. *Link/Age: Composing in the Online Classroom*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997.

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In *Link/Age*, Joan Tornow uses an ethnographic approach to consider how writing students respond to computers and networks. Her book offers a perceptive glimpse into the changing literacy concerns of online writing students and teachers. While acknowledging the furious pace of change set by today's computing worlds, Tornow also believes that her immersion into online language learning experiences has enabled her to understand significant elements of her students' learning interactions. She is mindful of the way students and teachers make transitions from traditional learning spaces to networked ones, and she is insightful about the fact that her students are not only negotiating innovative learning contexts, but that the networked classroom can best be understood "in the context of a networked society and its careening complexity" (1). Considering the increasing role of computers in the way we teach writing, most writing teachers can use this book to better understand a variety of dynamic literacy concerns evident in networked learning communities.

Though Tornow's sense of learning community is very focused on what happens in her English department's computer lab, some of her most interesting analysis reaches beyond the lab and our discipline. Although further development of some of her "Faigley-

based” postmodern concerns might have extended the applications of her work, Tornow does make solid attempts to consider online learning in both specific and global ways. Certainly, *Link/Age* will help writing teachers at all levels sharpen their practical and pedagogical ideas about teaching online.

“Underlife and Identity,” one of the book’s more interesting chapters, reveals Tornow’s talent for seeing language learning in both specific classroom and broader “real life” contexts and shows that she has written this book with her ear close to student ground. Instead of wagging the typical negative finger at the discourse disjunction between students and teachers, Tornow thinks through and analyzes network discussion of students in some refreshingly real ways. She has mastered online learning discourse and seems to understand how rhetorical power is increased while teaching authority may be decreased.

In dismissing some aspects of school as merely a game, students just may find a space to engage in dialogue of genuine interest. In one sense, it could be argued that everything we do in a classroom is a game of some kind. But if this is indeed the case, then we should at least let students choose and shape the game they play. In doing so through writing, they may find unique opportunities for collaboration, invention, and expression. (104)

Tornow’s twenty-seven chapters offer analyses of “E-text Coming of Age” that are quite valuable for online denizens of academic, personal, and work place worlds. The book probably achieves such a strong analytical synthesis of “E-Communities” because Tornow’s experience is based upon being able to use computers to reduce and exploit communication disjunctions between students and teachers. In *Link/Age*, a changing perception of what learning to write really means is explored

through a variety of points of view. Tornow's ability to weave student voices into her text is one of its most striking features. *Link/Age* offers readers (most likely teachers) an opportunity to consider a range of discourse and community learning issues that should serve to enlighten online writing teachers from "newbies" to "innovator/path finders."

Perhaps the weakest aspect of *Link/Age* is that because it does such a fine job of analyzing language learning on one local area network, its best points may end up as being perceived as a bit localized. Tornow, for example, offers only occasional nods to issues of access—issues which can stop online learning before anything or anyone really gets turned on and which may be more integral to her work than she describes. In addition, we may wonder if Tornow's technical resources surpass those many of us are likely to obtain.

Offering hands-on insights, *Link/Age* is likely to help teachers improve their online teaching transitions. Tornow's prophetic and rhetorical points about teaching with computers, combined with her belief in the future of literacy and online language instruction, do not stop her from linking her points to real students and actual language learning challenges. *Link/Age* makes fine progress toward Tornow's belief that "networked classrooms appearing on campuses across the country can be treated as laboratories for pedagogical renewal" (224).

Regina Paxton Foehr and Susan A. Schiller, editors. *The Spiritual Side of Writing: Releasing the Learner's Whole Potential*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Boynton/Cook 1997.

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The Spiritual Side of Writing: Releasing the Learner's Whole Potential demonstrates that the notion of "spirit" can be taken seriously in composition scholarship. This book is not about, as one colleague of mine put it, "touchy-feely, new age mysticism." Instead it is a collection of insightful —sometimes moving— essays, which explore aspects of spirituality in connection to writing and teaching writing.

While some readers may resist the infusion of spirituality into the academy, this book makes the forceful argument that spirituality and education are already intertwined. By drawing on scholarship about spirit from realms as disparate as quantum physics, traditional Navajo teachings, Zen Buddhism, environmental principles, and mainstream Judeo-Christian theology, *The Spiritual Side of Writing* demonstrates that "spirit" has long been a subject of multidisciplinary scholarly consideration. This is an important and courageous publication, in large part because of the debate about spirit-based discourse it will likely spark.

Contributors to this collection define *spirit* in different ways, including "inner growth" (5), "communicating with the Absolute" (49), participation in the "universal consciousness" (84), and a "form of clarity not necessarily related to religion" (157). While not distinguishing between "spirit" and "soul" as other literature does (see, for example, the work of James Hillman and Thomas

Moore), the definitions of “spirit” offered in the volume seem largely coherent. “Spirit,” as used here, has to do with transcendence of intellectual self, connection to others, and a sense of reason in the universe. A major premise of the book is that writing and teaching writing can bring writers, teachers of writers, and students to a more spiritually aware place by putting them in touch with a higher – or at least different – power, be it nature, the deities of the Navajo people, the calm space within, or a Judeo-Christian concept of God.

Addressing the spiritual in writing and teaching writing takes many forms in this book. There are theoretical pieces; for example, Christopher Ferry argues that we remember that Paulo Freire’s pedagogy is based on spiritual tenets (148); James Moffett suggests that the purpose of life is to “live to learn” (5); and Kristie Fleckenstein charges that the cognitive and affective must be united in order to promote a pedagogy that “evokes a spiritual center” (26). There is an interview with Larry Dossey, John Bradshaw, and Thomas Moore that explores, among other things, these authors’ approaches to writing (63). In addition, many chapters recollect pedagogies and experiences. These include Paul Heilker’s methods for using meditation books to teach students the process of rhetorical analysis (107); Jacqueline Rinaldi’s use of writing with people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (118); and Marianthe Karanikas’s strategies for bringing insight meditation into the technical writing class (162).

This book is a very provocative and useful introduction to the connection between writing, teaching writing, and spirituality. As an introduction to the relationship between writing and spirit, it aims for breadth rather than depth. Although most of the fifteen essays are uniform in length—about nine pages, I sometimes found myself surprised to turn the page and find that the chapter had ended. One reason that chapter endings surprised me is that these essays touch on such large issues that I often found myself wanting

more information, more insights, more examples. Another reason is the book's approach to citations. Instead of works cited lists at the end of each chapter, the editors provide an annotated bibliography at the end of the volume. I found this format both useful and annoying; I was annoyed when I wished to get a quick look at a cite, but I was pleased with the wealth of information in the thirty pages of eight-point type available in the concise and useful Selected Annotated Bibliography. The bibliography includes quotations from works cited which provides a sense of the tone and nature of the selections. These bibliographic entries are widely varied—they range from folklore to Frijtof Capra. This bibliography offers readers a strategy for expanding their understanding of the issues raised.

Readers may expect a volume such as this to be written in language other than that traditionally used by academics. In fact, in Wendy Bishop's chapter, "Teaching Lives," she reminds readers that "[p]ostmodern anthropology and feminist theory suggest alternative ways of reporting both practice and research—honoring story, testimony, anecdote, informal analysis, regularized lore" (134). While much of what is reported in *The Spiritual Side of Writing* is reported in "alternative ways," more of it than I would have expected is still in "academese." At times, I was struck by the mismatch of the message and the language. However, other essays used language that very much matched the message, like Richard Graves's conclusion to "Grace, in Pedagogy,"

Perhaps the best we can do is to try to keep our hearts open. Then maybe, when we least expect it—at noon or in the morning or at some wildly surprising time—grace will come again. If it does, the day will be better for it. (24)

As one of the first publications on this topic from a major composition publishing house, *The Spiritual Side of Writing* is significant. This book's very existence will provoke discussion and debate about an issue on which most academics are oddly silent. I found myself moved by stories, ideas, and insights, and I was encouraged by the notion that teaching and writing could go beyond the academic, intellectual, and political, and into the potentially rewarding realm of spirit.

Donald C. Stewart and Patricia L. Stewart. *The Life and Legacy of Fred Newton Scott*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 1997.

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Authors Donald C. Stewart and Patricia L. Stewart provide a richly detailed biography of Fred Newton Scott, a talented, late nineteenth-century teacher and scholar who was the first president of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). As John C. Brereton states on the book's jacket, *The Life and Legacy of Fred Newton Scott* "will easily become a standard work in the field, must reading for anyone exploring the century-long tradition of college writing instruction." The Stewarts' biography surveys Scott's life and work and, in so doing, discusses the history and development of composition and rhetoric.

Not only does the book recover and emphasize the importance of Scott's work, but it represents also a tribute to the careful research of Donald Stewart, who died of cancer in 1992. Stewart had been working on the project since 1980, examining several archives related to Scott, reading Scott's many publications, and corresponding with Scott's remaining family members. After

Donald Stewart's death, the project was carried on by his wife, Patricia, who "was ready to shape the mass of materials and partial manuscript into Don's vision" (*xii*). Patricia Stewart, who says she had "unwittingly been groomed" to take on the project, had worked with her husband on other publications, and taught English with him at Wisconsin, Illinois, and Kansas State (*xii*).

In their book, the Stewarts highlight Scott's many accomplishments. A common theme echoed throughout the biography is that Scott was a "visionary" who was "ahead of his time" (213). The Stewarts move from Scott's formative years at Indiana Normal School (now Indiana State University) and the University of Michigan to his middle years as the head of the Department of Rhetoric at Michigan, where he also became involved in journalism. They then examine his later years, where Scott's interest shifted to philology and linguistics. In addition, the Stewarts discuss several of Scott's publications, which include articles in language, journalism, aesthetics, philology, and linguistics. They also examine Scott's articles in composition and rhetoric and collaboratively written textbooks. In these works, Scott emphasized writing in a social context, he viewed writing and education as an organic process, and he saw rhetoric as an interdisciplinary field, drawing particularly on developments in psychology. Scott also wrote about issues facing composition, and he was involved in meetings aimed at bridging the gap between secondary schools and college English teachers. In addition, Scott was particularly active "in seeking to make of rhetoric a legitimate field, insisting it was a science, not an art"(3).

One of Scott's major contributions was his creation of a separate Department of Rhetoric at Michigan in 1903. Even before the creation of the department, Scott had given graduate courses in rhetoric; several master's degrees and one doctorate in rhetoric were earned under Scott before 1900. As the Stewarts point out, "By his retirement in 1927, close to one hundred fifty master's

degrees and nearly twenty-five doctorates had been awarded in the field of rhetoric. No other college had such a record” (4). It is difficult to estimate the influence Scott had on his students. However, some of his students included Gertrude Buck, Sterling A. Leonard, and Ruth Mary Weeks. Scholars have identified Buck as an innovative theorist and educator, and Leonard and Weeks both served as presidents of the NCTE (4).

The Stewarts’ work is a major contribution to the teaching of writing because it deepens our understanding of the history of late nineteenth-century composition and rhetoric. In their thoughtful interpretations of Scott’s writing, the Stewarts do not rely almost exclusively on analysis of textbooks as some scholars previously have done. Instead, they draw upon his diary, his personal correspondence, and the accounts of his students to provide more of the everyday texture of Scott’s life. In their recounting of Scott’s “advanced” theoretical ideas, the Stewarts also challenge interpretations that depict the nineteenth century as a period of decline for rhetoric.

The biography also is significant for writing teachers, particularly those at college and university levels. Teachers can see the history of issues that still are concerns today, such as questions involving supposed “literacy crises.” In addition, the book includes Scott’s specific views on the teaching of writing. For instance, Scott believed that paper correcting was not itself a tiresome endeavor. Scott argued that a major part of the problem was that teachers needed to see beyond error to the student:

What is the object of composition work in schools? The teacher of composition who does no more than to cultivate in his students a facility of speech has overlooked the main point. His first and most important duty is to develop character, to bring out in the boy or girl the man or woman that is to be(qtd. in Stewart and Stewart 72)

Scott's humane emphasis in teaching writing seems as helpful today as it was almost a century ago.

Like all works, though, the biography has its limitations. The book tends to uphold the heroes-and-villains approach to composition history. This happens when passages valorizing Scott's work are juxtaposed with comments about the more limited view of composition by Adams Sherman Hill. Similarly, by highlighting Scott as "too prescient for his time," the biography tends to separate Scott from his own period, specifically the broader context of the Progressive Era. Overall, though, the Stewarts' biography has much to offer scholars interested in the history of writing and teachers of writing.

Walvoord, Barbara, Linda Lawrence Hunt, H. Fil Dowling, and Joan D. McMahon. *In the Long Run: A Study of Faculty in Three Writing-Across-The Curriculum Programs*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1997.

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In 1989, several colleagues and I presented the findings of our WAC assessment project at Plattsburgh State University at the CCCC and the SUNY Council on Writing. We reported that the faculty had told us that WAC had changed their teaching in general, not just their teaching of writing. Barbara Walvoord and her colleagues evidently noticed the same thing, and because they pursued the implications of this discovery with zeal and expertise, those of us working in WAC have *In the Long Run* from which to learn and by which to be cheered. By providing rich documentation of the progress of WAC in three very different academic venues, they have convincingly demonstrated that the

lasting benefits of WAC are changes in classroom practices, the teaching-learning environment, and even the self-concept and career paths of the WAC participants.

The authors based their study on three research questions: “what did faculty expect from WAC, what did WAC experiences mean to faculty, and how has WAC affected their teaching and careers?”(16). They answer these questions by examining a vast amount of data generated for the study, including questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and course materials collected on three campuses from 1993 to 1995—the University of Cincinnati, Towson State College (Baltimore), and Whitworth College (Spokane)—as well as found data collected by several of the co-authors before they had undertaken the collaborative project that resulted in the book. The book itself is comprised of nine chapters, including an overview of research, a discussion of methodology, “Detailed Reports” on the three colleges, five chapters devoted to answering the three research questions posed above, a conclusion, and five appendices containing the research instruments they used.

In justifying their research model, the authors offer a cogent taxonomy and critique of WAC research study methods. The methods they find wanting or incomplete when used in isolation include what they call “match-to-sample,” open-ended questions, and case studies. By “match-to-sample,” the authors mean a procedure by which the researcher tests how thoroughly and successfully faculty have adopted the practices “that the *researchers* have defined to be central to WAC” (3). Regardless of the mode of inquiry, match-to-sample studies—of which their least favorite seems to be Bratcher and Stroble (1994)—are tests of compliance with orthodoxy; they leave no room for the participants to take charge of WAC and to proclaim it as a means of pedagogical and professional growth. According to the authors, the researchers’ narrow definition of and expectations for WAC, their silencing of their colleagues by denying them a full range of

possible responses, and, too often, their vested interest in the outcomes render suspect research based solely on match-to-sample methodology.

“Open-ended questions about change,” such as a study by Eble and McKeachie (1985), “*leave to the faculty* judgments about cause and effect that are so important to WAC leaders” (6). Case studies such as Sipple (1987) and Kipling and Murphy (1992) offer rich detail, but often “retain the problems of voice, power, and defining good, which were typical in match-to-sample studies” (7). The authors relegate to a special circle of WAC research hell studies of resistance to WAC that castigate faculty who fall short of the WAC leaders’ expectations. Swilky (1992) and Swanson-Owens (1986) are two studies that point out how faculty “fail” to implement the goals of workshop presenters. Walvoord et al. are as critical of the tone of these two pieces—which they regard as dismissive and condescending—as they are of the content, because they see WAC as a democratic and collaborative effort that sets in motion changes that cannot and should not be predetermined. Although I agree with their critique of these two studies, I also know that some faculties do resist WAC and every other attempt at improving teaching. In my experience, such people are rare enough, however, that the optimism of *In the Long Run* seems well founded.

Researchers who are on the right path, and whose work inspired the authors, include Carneson (1994) and Hargreaves (1988), both of whom search for change and growth with the underlying assumption that skilled and thoughtful practitioners will fuse in the crucible of their professional creativity their teaching philosophies and experiences with whatever they have learned from exposure to WAC. This is precisely what Walvoord et al. have sought to do in their analysis and presentation of their data. The chapters in which they present the answers to their research questions feature the often lengthy comments of faculty

who participated in WAC workshops as well as samples of classroom materials from a wide range of disciplines. Respondents are generally positive about what the exposure to workshop and post-workshop consultations has meant to their teaching and writing, but the specific practices they have chosen to reject, abandon, or keep over time are as varied as their professional aims and personal proclivities. The authors rightly claim that “our data are better able to tell what faculty believe to have happened—and what WAC meant to them—than to pin down precisely what classroom changes actually happened in a scientifically verifiable way”(31).

Thus, the focus of *In the Long Run* is on the faculty studied. Although the book contains classroom exercises and discussions of practices that WAC workshop presenters and participants will find helpful, its great strength is that it is a believable celebration of the transformative power of WAC, believable because the faculty speak to us directly, over time, in interview transcripts or in pieces prepared for the study. At its best, WAC is a potent catalyst for pedagogical reform and professional growth. Listening to voices of *In the Long Run* reinforces belief in the power of WAC.

