

The Passions that Mark Us Teaching, Texts, and Technologies

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The American college wanted and revered men like Professor Fletcher O. Marsh, who in 1866 hauled manure all one day that the grounds of Denison College might in some way be made more beautiful; men of all work like John Smith of Dartmouth, whose appointment made him “Professor of English, Latin, Greek, Chaldee, etc., and such other languages as he shall have time for.” What the American college wanted or needed was a man like Father William Stack Murphy of Fordham who in 1840s would, while shaving and gesticulating with his razor, listen to his students practice orations and then go off to conduct classes which were a wonder of charm, interest, and successful teaching.

Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*

I don’t believe that many English teachers are lazy; rather the tension here is between the kind of work we see ourselves as doing and the kind society is most willing to pay us for. An explanation is required for the fact that English teachers don’t claim more credit for the part of our work that society values and less for the part that society hardly knows of and would probably disapprove of if it knew more.

Richard Ohmann, *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession*

It’s a full-time job (and more) not only to keep pace with the inevitable changes in hardware and software, but also to stay current with the exponentially increasing body of theoretical and critical literature on everything cyber, virtual, hyper, and digital, and most importantly of all, to find ways in which to implement the technology so as to make a real difference in my classroom and in my scholarship.

Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Chronicle of Higher Education*
July 25, 1997: B11

POPULAR DISCOURSES RELATED TO TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP IN ENGLISH studies traditionally link life in the profession with the world of privilege and leisure in protected enclaves often associated with the upper classes—they seldom,

if ever, mention technology. College English professors of both sexes tend to be represented as bookish types in tweeds and corduroys, wielding leaky pens, outfitted in the suitably subdued colors of navy and tan, and, more recently, in the pervasive all-black of those likely to take cultural studies as their field of study. And yet, all of this, one might argue, the pens, the books, and the attire, can be understood as technologies that are associated with language studies—even though the black of traditional academic robes has been afforded new authority with the ascendancy of postmodernism and the computer has assumed new importance in our study of discourses, communication, and language.

But these changes notwithstanding, as Richard Ohmann argues above, many in the public sphere continue to see English professors as occupying a station in life that requires less in the way of hourly, accounted-for-labor than that of their neighbors inhabiting worlds outside of academe. And, although we know that few citizens would cast English professors in the role of hauling manure to beautify the grounds of their college campuses, as Rudolf above describes Fletcher O. Marsh, few, also, we would argue, construct them as the erudite technology-wielding expert that English graduate student Matthew G. Kirschenbaum aspires to become through his work in the academy. Yet these various and contradictory renditions of English professors exist side-by-side in a world that is changing so fast that any commonplace understandings of what we're about as scholars and teachers in English studies are constantly being called into question—even our own. The passions that mark us—teaching, texts, the day-to-day work environs, the challenges of a changing society and sometimes the new technologies—descend from the scholarly deeds of those who have gone before us; yet they also mean that we enter the future transformed. Certainly the trajectories of our own lives—especially those portions that combine interests in the humanities and in the design, use, and study of computer technologies—escape easy classification and evade the stereotypes of English professors which continue to be kept alive in popular society.

As English professors who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s and entered the profession in the 1970s, neither of us started teaching with computers; we learned as we went. And what we learned convinced us that computers were becoming increasingly important in educational settings—not simply because they are tools for writing (they are not simply tools; they are, indeed, complex technological artifacts that embody and shape—and are shaped by—the ideological assumptions of an entire culture), but rather because these machines serve as powerful cultural and catalytic forces in the lives of teachers and students. Although the machines themselves mean little to us and to the authors of the essays we present here, the work they support and the connections they make possible mean a great deal.

It is through our own work with the new technologies, for example, that we continue to re-discover an essential truth about our profession—that teaching and research are inherently social and political activities, and that the human exchanges resting at the heart of our work take place not only among faculty

members and students, but among faculty members themselves. As teacher-scholars, we do our best work when we can talk together, write together, and think together about what we do. Seldom have we been the lone, solitary writers of the garret. And even if current administrative structures of university teaching often serve to isolate instructors from one another—limiting collaborative teaching projects (as too expensive and not efficient) and restricting faculty members' travel to conferences and sites for scholarly research (by eliminating or reducing travel monies)—we have learned to use computers to re-establish connections with colleagues, share the important stories of teaching, reflect in critical ways on the work and profession that we share. Nonetheless, the changes supported by the new information technologies are not without complication, and they have their own price for English professors.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, we find ourselves very much in need of models that offer strategies for acting productively in the face of social change. Indeed, such change is so rapid and far-reaching that it sometimes threatens to paralyze us with fear and inaction. Our own classrooms, and those of most of our colleagues, seem to be populated by students who see little connection between traditional literacy education and the world problems that they currently face—the continuing destruction of global ecosystems, the epidemic spread of AIDS and other diseases, terrorism, racism, homophobia, the impotence of political leaders and the irrelevance of their parties. Faced with these challenges and with others of equal magnitude, many faculty teaching in English studies find themselves scrambling to re-think and re-design educational efforts within expanded ethical contexts that recognize vastly different global perspectives, learning how to function with an increasing sense of responsibility in new and taxing economic parameters, acknowledging and then addressing the need to learn a range of rapidly changing technologies that allow for an expanded network of communication and intellectual exchange.

Clearly these projects are complicated endeavors which require intelligence and passion, and an understanding of the underlying cultural formation and dynamics that link humans and their technologies in such robust ways. As scholar-teachers of English, we often find ourselves ill prepared for taking on many of the tasks involved in these efforts. Like the authors in this volume, most in the profession have come of age in a print generation and our thinking has both been shaped and limited by this fact. Few of us are equipped to function effectively and comfortably in virtual literacy environments. Indeed, like many citizens, college faculty are just beginning to learn what it means to work successfully within a society that is dependent on computer technology for literacy activities. We are only beginning to identify, for example, the complexity of the challenges posed by such a society, including the challenge of adapting to an increasingly rapid pace of change. Nor do we necessarily have the lived experiences that allow us to deal productively with this climate of change.

As a result, we often find ourselves casting about for effective ways to educate students for a world with which we, ourselves, are unfamiliar—and about

which we remain uncertain. In her 1970 book *Culture and Commitment*, Margaret Mead describes the unsettling sense of functioning within such a cultural milieu. In this work, she calls cultures of this kind “prefigurative.” The prefigurative learning culture occurs in a society where change is so rapid that adults are trying to prepare children for experiences the adults themselves have never had. The prefigurative cultural style, Mead argues, prevails in a world where the “past, the culture that had shaped [young adults’] understanding—their thoughts, their feelings, and their conceptions of the world—[is] no sure guide to the present. And the elders among them, bound to the past, [can] provide no models for the future” (70).

Mead traces these broad patterns of cultural change particularly in terms of American culture, all the while setting her analysis within a global context. She claims that the prefigurative culture characteristic of America in the 1960s and ensuing years—and, we maintain, in the new millennium—is symptomatic of a world changing so fast that it exists “without models and without precedent,” a culture in which “neither parents nor teachers, lawyers, doctors, skilled workers, inventors, preachers, or prophets” (xx) can teach children what they need to know about the world. Mead notes that the immediate and dramatic needs our prefigurative culture faces—fueled by increasing world hunger, the continuing population explosion, the rapid explosion of technological knowledge, the threat of continued war, global communication—demand a new kind of social and educational response that privileges participatory input, ecological sensitivity, an appreciation for cultural diversity, and the intelligent use of technology, among other approaches.

In the prefigurative society, Mead notes, students must—at least to some extent—learn important lessons from each other, helping each other find their way through an unfamiliar thicket of issues and situations about which the elder members of the society are uncertain. As teachers in such a culture, our education contributions must take a dramatic turn. Unlike previous generations of English professors, we cannot promise to provide students with a stable and unchanging body of knowledge—especially in connection with technology use. Indeed, we cannot even provide ourselves with such intellectual comforts.

The teachers and authors contributing to this volume add their passionate voices to the discussion of issues surrounding—and shaping—information technologies at the century’s end. As a collection, the essays demonstrate the value of seeking understanding in unfamiliar and familiar places and of learning in new and old ways—of continuing to take risks in connection with the new technologies even when those risks produce results that are unsatisfactory in some way. Because we ourselves are uncertain of the directions that the English profession will take in the coming century, we believe that such an approach—as represented within this collection—offers a thoughtful look at the techno-cultural contexts with which all teacher-scholars must learn to contend.

The essays in this volume are grouped in four sections, each focused on one particular aspect of English professionals' lives as they struggle to bring the new technologies into their field of vision. The chapters in Part I, "Refiguring Notions of Literacy in an Electronic World," provide an historical overview of writing as a technology and move quickly to challenge—and sometimes defend—conventional and not so conventional notions of literacy within the context of the current wired world. In the first chapter, Dennis Baron discusses the development and spread of writing technologies from the invention of writing itself down to the present, with a focus on the pencil, the computer, and Henry David Thoreau, who contributed to the technology of pencils but scoffed at the invention of the telegraph. Baron argues that information technologies are invented for a limited purpose and are the property of a small group of initiates. As access increases across society, new functions are devised, costs decrease, and facility of use increases. Traditionally, Baron notes, such technologies proliferate by mimicking previous inventions, but often they are resisted by traditionalists. Once accepted, new technologies come into their own, as humans experiment with new—and previously undreamed of—modes of communication. Only at this stage, Baron contends, are previous technologies drawn under the sway of newer technologies. So goes the technological world of writing.

Technological development, however, does not always seem to advance the cause of literacy, as Douglas Hesse reminds us. Urging caution in chapter two, Hesse discusses what is lost if we too quickly celebrate the demise of essayistic literacy as we adapt to the cultural, and technological, context of postmodernism. In contrasting the essayistic tradition from Montaigne, developed as anti-methodical discourse, with the scientific tradition, he argues that commonly held misconceptions of the essay require more than just correcting a loose definition. His comparison allows us to see two very different critiques of the "essayistic" by those who promote new computer discourses. In affirming that there is a place for the essayistic, not as the model of discourse but as one important mode of discourse, Hesse's argument is part political/legalistic and cultural and part psychological, with implications for individual writers, readers, and teachers. Indeed, we might say that Hesse argues for an expanded understanding of the essay as a technology itself, and one that remains valuable for individuals within current cultural contexts. Like most technologies, he reminds us, the essay shapes our thinking and our understanding as well as our communication practices in ways that we need to continue to study, investigate, and appreciate.

In chapter three, Sarah Sloane focuses our attention on the writer, in this instance, a student writer. Based on a case study of J., a reluctant first-year writer in a computer-based writing classroom, Sloane's essay develops the critical term "genealogy" as a word that describes how memories and habits of other medial contexts affect the choices a student writer makes while composing at the computer. In a contribution that resonates with themes in both

Hesse's and Baron's work, Sloane argues that a writer's choice of composing tools and setting, as well as his or her choice of topic and form, are always informed by memory, or what she calls "medial hauntings" and "apparitional knowledge" of earlier writing experiences. The article first develops the critical category of "genealogy" (relying on Nietzsche and Foucault) and then applies the term to the experiences of J. as he chooses topic, tool, and setting in his first-year writing class. Sloane suggests that other practitioners of case study methodology pay more attention to how genealogy may inform their models of computer-based composing processes.

In chapter four, which also resonates with the other pieces in this section, Gunther Kress invites us to challenge current notions of literate activities which invariably, he argues, exclude considerations of the visual. He reminds us that the word "literacy" exists in English but has no precise counterpart in German or the romance languages where similar words denote a more literal facility with the technology of the alphabet, rather than encapsulating the wide range of abilities entangled in the English word "literate." He focuses on the changes that have occurred in the written form of the language by comparing the pages of newspapers and textbooks, and, in doing so, illustrates the need for changes in English curricula and pedagogy. Throughout his chapter, he emphasizes that the visual is not so much new in itself as new in the recent history of representation where display and arrangement are taking on new meaning and are often neglected in English courses of study. According to Kress, the latest relationships between text and image demand a new theory of meaning. Responding implicitly to Kress and to Hesse in the chapter that follows, Myka Vielstimmig, the collaborative author enacted by Michael Spooner and Kathleen Yancey, fashions an essay that experiments visually with the arrangement of text, but also touches on the shaping influences of technology. In explaining that the chapter is not an argument against the essay, Vielstimmig argues that it is itself an essay of "radically different identity politics," admitting many genres, and asks readers to experience the polyphonic visual and poetic patterns of coherence. Each chapter in this section presents an inkling of what is to come—the germ of an idea which is subsequently repeated and expanded upon throughout the chapters of the book.

Taken together, all five essays in this section prepare the way for Diana George and Diane Shoos's insightful response on the necessity for reconfiguring the role of the visual in literate societies in a postmodern age. As these authors note, to "get at some of the intertextual demands of a literacy that insists on the role of the visual (and the electronic) as well as the verbal," we have to learn to value the visual as a fundamental part of literacy. In order to accomplish this task, we have to look beyond a simplistic understanding of technology or medium—whether the information is presented in film, print, television and video images, web pages or print layouts, charts and other graphic illustrations of information, or the interplay of font and text—and

focus on images as they embody meaning and force intertextual play at multiple levels and in multiple ways.

Part II, “Revisiting Notions of Teaching and Access in an Electronic World,” foregrounds the difficult issues involved in the relationship between technological change and everyday teaching and work practices. In chapter seven, Lester Faigley reminds us that the relationship is not an easy one. He begins with four stories that highlight the promise and peril of the Internet and observes that his stories are only a few among the many that promote the Internet as purveyor of all things in the name of progress. But sometimes hidden in these stories, he argues, are huge inequities that teachers see every day. His essay ultimately asks: “What sort of future will children enter in the aftermath of the massive redistribution of wealth and disruption of patterns of employment that have occurred during the last two decades?”

In chapter eight, Marilyn Cooper turns to the challenges involved in developing a postmodern pedagogy that responds to some of the material conditions Faigley sets forth. For Cooper, postmodernism can provide opportunities to help us make sense of the changes we experience all around us—shifts in modes of transportation, in communication technologies, in the global economy, in ways of living. With these shifts, she argues, come changes in our responsibilities and practices as teachers. According to Cooper, we need to rethink assumptions about knowledge, language, and the self as they get played out in our everyday actions, if we are to use the new information technologies effectively in our teaching.

In chapter nine, James Sosnoski underscores the practical need for such reconsiderations by focusing on reading practices that attend electronic media. Just as we have come to understand writing as an activity enabled and extended by technology, Sosnoski would have us think of reading as an activity that is similarly shaped—and abetted—by technology. Without effective browsers, search engines, and indexing programs, we will be unable to manage the huge amount of information with which we are constantly deluged; even with them, some will understand the new reading—hyper-reading, if you will—as resulting in a loss of coherence and substance. Like Cooper, Sosnoski would have us undertake the teaching of hyper-reading as informed action, thoughtful action in which the pedagogical and postmodern connect rather than separate those of us who would teach English studies.

In chapter ten, Geoffrey Sirc demonstrates yet another way to view the changing and overlapping sites of teaching and writing and technology. Using Marcel Duchamp as a lens through which to view relevant issues, Sirc argues that we can begin to see how changes in conceptions of work accompany changes in technology. These changes, in turn, result in changes in the language about work or writing, and, eventually, changes in its function. All writing, for Sirc, has become screen writing—“the whole text double-exposed by images and sound-bites”—it is writing that never stops but is always in motion, home pages constantly updated, discussion lists ongoing, links connecting them all.

Thus he shows us how changes in writing practices—how changes in language, thought, and technology—shape one another and finally transform what we are about as teachers, students, scholars, writers.

Sometimes these changes, however, blind us to the realities of the material world that constitute our working lives. Charles Moran, in chapter eleven, insists that we pay more attention to issues of access that have been too long neglected. According to Moran, the field has a responsibility to address issues of access more directly than it now does. It could, and should, investigate not only high-end technology but low-end technology. It could, and should, encourage the widespread use of affordable technology as a teaching tool in our classrooms rather than moving so quickly to advocating high-end technologies. And when we do study the uses of high-end technology, we need to discover ways of foregrounding issues of access while we do so. Throughout his chapter, Moran argues convincingly that the field has for too long ignored what Kozol has termed “savage inequalities.”

Bringing the chapters in this section together, Bertram Bruce gifts us with his insight: the authors in this section must swim against the current discourse surrounding the new technologies to talk about what is central to pedagogy. Although the issues they raise about income disparities, irregularity of employment, access issues, and moral responsibilities are ones that should not be ignored, they tend to fall outside acceptable academic discourse that seeks the neutral and analyzable, avoiding at all costs the passion so evident in these essays. When we as editors were asked which essay prompted us to lead off the title of this book with “passions,” we had no ready answer. Many of the essays in this collection speak passionately about what should matter today—about the ethical dimensions of everyday teaching and living—and not a few are in this section.

The essays in Part III, “Ethical and Feminist Concerns in an Electronic World,” are no less passionate in foregrounding issues that are too little written about in our profession. In chapter thirteen, James Porter invokes communitarian ethics to provide a heuristic through which cyberwriters can address some of the ethical dilemmas they face. Porter would have us ask how we situate ourselves ethically as writers and “publishers” of electronic discourse, as listowners and managers of discussion groups, as web authors, and as teachers in what he calls “Internetworked” writing classes. In certain cases, he believes, online communities need protection from individuals and that the field’s current focus on the individual writer, student, and text endorses an ideology that precludes actions against individual online acts of violence. Throughout his chapter, he argues that liberal individualism as advocated by such groups as the Electronic Frontier Foundation will not bring about desired changes in fundamental online inequities anymore than it has offline. Instead of free speech on the networks, he fears that we will instead end up with increased commercial control, favoring society’s same privileged groups that Moran describes as on the rich side of the “wealth gap.”

Also interested in online equity issues and in the opportunities—or not—that the new media provide for women, Susan Romano, in chapter fourteen, turns to examining various subject positions that women take up in an online writing class. Using early archives of in-class synchronous writing, she finds that the online discursive environment has a history of both exclusionary and inclusionary practices. As “lurker historian,” Romano looks at these practices framed by “pedagogies of the self,” the means by which writing teachers encourage students to experiment with alternate identities. As they experiment, she argues, women must decide to position themselves as women or find other places to stand; even with their use of pseudonyms, she wonders how free the women are to say what they want or to occupy other subject positions. For Romano, the metaphors of freedom, open space, and frontiers that so frequently describe online life tend to mystify virtual social arrangements and may have little value in opening up new subjectivities for women.

Following fast upon Romano’s inquiry, in chapter fifteen, Hawisher and Sullivan look to the World Wide Web and its representation of women. In scrutinizing how women visually represent themselves on home pages and how they get represented, the authors begin to describe how women write, authorize, and control the electronic spaces of the Web pages. Their overarching argument is that although feminists in computers and composition have focused almost exclusively on the textual environments of computer-mediated communication, the heightened possibilities for self-representation brought about by the Web suggest that a simple transfer of arguments about women’s verbal online lives is inadequate as a strategy for exploring visual representations. In an effort to complicate electronic discourse theories, they analyze online visual representations of women in a variety of discursive settings.

This scrutiny of the visual, especially within the context of a technological culture, continues in chapter sixteen, authored by Cynthia Selfe, and focuses on commercial advertisements about technology that appear in print magazines. The visual representations used to sell computers and other information technologies, Selfe tells us, are often shot through with the same old traditional narratives of our culture where women are represented as beauties or seductresses and men as bikers and techno-geeks. These conventional stories told yet again in the context of new technologies, she argues, should remind us of our ethical responsibilities to work as college English teachers toward productive change, however slow or difficult that change may be.

A related focus on narratives also informs chapter seventeen, in which Carolyn Guyer and Dianne Hagaman acknowledge the “impulse to narrative” and present us with Carolyn Heilbrun’s notion that we have no choice but to use the stories we have read or heard to make new narratives. These are what we must build on. In moving from the material enclosures of rooms to the virtual textual spaces of MOOs to the visual settings of the World Wide Web, Guyer would have us see neither word nor image as dominating. She believes that the electronic meeting places of the Internet—where people from all over

the world mingle and cross boundaries—just might enable us to construct new stories, to construct ourselves anew, to move into the next room. In Guyer and Hagaman's chapter, there are no images of the electronic frontier with its requisite console cowboys; instead we see and read Hagaman's evocative photographs of a mission room, a San Francisco kitchen, a dining room, a memorial service room, and other meeting rooms, one furnished with "sun chairs."

In the response chapter that closes this section and that speaks to the issues raised in all five of the previous chapters, Cynthia Haynes seeks to expose the hidden connections among the contributions and, in doing so, regards herself as a "co-respondent" who prefers being understood as permeating and being permeated by the "running exchange" of the authors in this section.

Part IV, "Searching for Notions of Our Postmodern Literate Selves in an Electronic World," picks up again the theme of literacy and explores its many facets. In chapter nineteen, Anne Wysocki and Johndan Johnson-Eilola ask why our culture tends to use the metaphor of literacy "for everything else?" By continuing to use "literacy" to explain what we and our students will achieve with new technologies, the authors argue, we continue to reproduce the idea that our relationship with technologies should be the same as that which we have with words—relationship which for most people is thought to be built step-by-step upon skills that are basic, neutral, visual, and disconnected from other practices. For Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola, hypermedia and synchronous conferencing are technologies that demand a re-thinking of the relationship of literacy and the technologies of writing. For them, such technologies are implicated in radical shifts in stability, identity, temporality, and spatial relations, all of which defy traditional analyses.

To illustrate some of the complications tied up in the god-term "literacy," Joe Amato then turns in chapter twenty from the academic to the autobiographical. In approaching the question of literacy, he deals with notions of socio-economic class, online technologies, and the teaching of writing but does so from the perspective of growing up mostly poor as an Italian-French-American in Syracuse, New York. He too sees "literacy" as a "powerfully fuzzy word" and writes, in part, about his father who possessed all those supposed basic literate skills mentioned by Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola but who struggled mightily to write the required words on welfare forms.

Continuing the autobiographical thread, Janet Carey Eldred, in chapter twenty-one, gives us stories and photographs depicting her relationship with her mother and writes of the technologies that connected and separated them. As a teenager, she was sometimes able to make herself heard by writing long impassioned letters to her mother; her spoken words were less powerful. In her mother's final days, Eldred turns to another writing technology—email—to put off hearing her mother's failed speech now replaced by the strange operator's voice of the T.D.D. phone. She wants to hear her mother's old voice, the written one if necessary, and this can be achieved through email: her mother's fingers, unlike her voice, can still make her voice ring loud

and true. For Eldred, technology's inflections will always be heard in any discussion of voice.

In chapter twenty-two, Michael Joyce refocuses the discussion on the future and asks "what next?" He asks his question not in the sense of wanting to know which new technology will follow upon the World Wide Web but rather in the sense of reviewing, and ultimately renewing, our relations of being in the world. He follows the open question with a series of more specific queries: "What next literacy, what next community, what next perception, what next embodiment, what next hope?" For Joyce, we are always living in the shadow of what comes next. While remembering his old teacher and mentor, he tells us that the electronic culture might well return us inevitably once again to prizing "human communities as sources of value, identity, and locality."

Finally, Stuart Moulthrop, in the last essay of the volume, responds to the chapters in this section and adds his own story to the collection. As a recent guest editor of a special issue on writing in and about hypertext for the online journal *Postmodern Culture*, Moulthrop must heed the copyright laws designed for print contexts. He must suppress a publication that its authors expected to be published because of his responsibilities to the academic press that publishes the journal. His actions, to himself, seem incongruent—they fly in the face of the optimism and hype that continue to accompany the new technologies as they enter the academic publishing world. There should, he argues, be "rules of intellectual property more appropriate to its fluid, promiscuous information space." As writer-teacher-editor, Moulthrop, like the other authors of this volume, must grapple directly with these legal and ethical issues as he negotiates the use of communication technologies in his everyday work.

Faced with these challenges and with others of equal magnitude, the authors in this collection find themselves scrambling to re-think and re-design educational and professional efforts within expanded ethical contexts. Like others in English studies, they must learn how to function with an increasing sense of responsibility in new and taxing economic, political, and cultural contexts, all the while acknowledging and then addressing the need to learn a range of rapidly changing technologies that allows for an expanded network of teaching, communication, and intellectual exchange. Their essays present a remarkable set of insights. The passions and pedagogies that mark them enrich our understanding and enlarge our appreciation of our present place in society, and they expand our understanding of how others might see us as English studies teachers, writers, and scholars.

In some ways, then, we have not changed our approach to teaching and scholarship so radically since the days when Professor Fletcher O. Marsh contributed to his college by offering manual labor in the service of beauty. We still offer labor—albeit in a different and sometimes more intellectual guise—to the service of learning and knowledge to the institutions and the students for whom we work. Nor have we really made such radical changes in our academic apparel, if we are judged by the fact that black is yet again our preferred

color, or by the fact that we still depend on technologies to teach, study, and communicate with one another (although far fewer of us gesticulate while shaving as we teach!). But in other ways the changes we face as we enter the next century couldn't be more dramatic and more deserving of passionate investigation and consideration. If we still depend on technologies to communicate with one another, for example, the specific technologies we now use have changed the world in ways that we have yet to identify or appreciate fully. And if we still concern ourselves with the study of language and the nature of literate exchanges, our understanding of the terms *literacy*, *text*, and *visual*, among others, have changed beyond recognition, challenging even our capacity to articulate them to the public and to one another in ways that will make productive differences in our lives and in the lives of others. In identifying these challenges and in trying to articulate their importance, the authors in this volume find themselves engaged in the messy, contradictory, and fascinating work of understanding how to live in a new world and a new century. As editors of this volume, we take great pleasure and pride in recommending these essays to you our readers. Not a little passion has gone into them.