at the beginning of each chapter and, in at least one case (Chapter 1), at the end of the chapter.

But these blemishes do not overshadow the importance of Ray’s argument. If, indeed, “the next great paradigm shift in composition” (157) is a method of study that recognizes the important contributions of teacher-practitioners and their students, then composition studies will certainly benefit from that plurality of voices. *The Practice of Theory* provides considerable help toward such a shift.

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Scholars in different disciplines often do not pay enough attention to each other’s work. Composition studies, in this respect, has often been happily atypical as a field; often deliberately and richly interdisciplinary, it borrows from psychology, anthropology, sociology, education, classical rhetoric, and feminist studies, among others. Yet, even for composition specialists, it is all too easy to be unaware of relevant goings on in other fields, and it is desperately hard to keep up with what’s going on in one’s own.

**Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy** never directly treats the teaching of writing; the word “composition” does not appear; and almost none of the citations are to composition specialists. Nevertheless, this is a book that should not be ignored by those comp scholars interested in the juncture between composition and feminism, and composition and critical or liberatory or progressive or radical pedagogies. The authors of articles in this collection question notions dear to many in comp, including “empowerment,” “student voice,” and student-centered pedagogy, from a poststructural feminist perspective.

For example, Elizabeth Ellsworth in “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy” criticizes “educational researchers” who, when talking about critical pedagogy, “consistently strip discussions of classroom practices of historical context and political position” (92). Such researchers stay at “a high level of abstraction.” Though Ellsworth does most intriguingly use her own practice as an example, she—as well as the other writers in
this volume—does not always get specific enough herself, does not always situate her theory sufficiently in narratives of her own classroom experience.

Ellsworth provocatively claims that “rational deliberation, reflection, and consideration of all viewpoints” isn’t always appropriate, citing her own class, in which the assumption of the existence and the evil of racism on the campus (UW-Madison) was not going to be questioned (94). Words that expressed the experience of racism on the campus served as “a reality check for survival”: “It is inappropriate to respond to such words by subjecting them to rationalist debate about their validity. Words spoken for survival come already validated in a radically different arena of proof and carry no option of luxury or choice” (94). Ellsworth later writes of how all the voices in her class—including her own—are historically situated and partial, borrowing the term from Aronowitz as she demonstrates the usefulness of postmodern/poststructural theory to her teaching (96). The fact that she—a white middle-class woman—could never know some things about “the experiences, oppressions, and understandings of other participants in the class” makes it impossible for “any single voice in the classroom—including that of the professor—to assume the position of center or origin of knowledge or authority…” (100).

Ellsworth’s article is the clearest application of post-structuralist assumptions to pedagogy in the volume and perhaps the most important article in the book, certainly for some composition specialists: cited from its previous home in a 1989 Harvard Educational Review, it has become canonical in recent years for scholars of feminism and composition.

Other articles in this volume could be of use as well: for example, Valerie Walkerdine’s analysis of the woman teacher’s role in progressive pedagogy, “Progressive Pedagogy and Political Struggle,” should be placed alongside Susan Miller’s discussion of “the sad women in the basement” in Textual Carnivals; the two discussions of gender in teaching enrich each other. Walkerdine’s article mercilessly critiques student-centered progressive pedagogy, in which, she argues, the woman teacher, responsible for “freeing each little individual,” is trapped into the role of nurturer (16). She maintains that “aspects of women’s sexuality are intimately bound up with the concept of progressivism.”

Most of this volume is concerned with taking apart radical pedagogy by means of poststructural and feminist strategies. For example, in “Feminist Politics in Radical Pedagogy” Carmen Luke writes, “Explicitly deconstructive work on educational theoretical metanarratives has not been a visible project” (25); she attempts in her chapter to do such work.

In “What We Can Do For You! What Can ‘We’ Do For ‘You’? Struggling over Empowerment in Critical and Feminist Pedagogy” Jennifer Gore writes, “Rather than seek to legitimate or celebrate critical or
feminist discourses, I want to look for their dangers, their normalizing tendencies, for how they might serve as instruments of domination despite the intentions of their creators” (54). In a similar vein, Patti Lather in "Post-Critical Pedagogies: A Feminist Reading” asks the question, “How do our very efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of dominance?” (122).

In “Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in ‘Liberatory’ Education: A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective” Mimi Orner writes,

Instead of framing the slipperiness of identity as a problem to be solved or an obstacle to be avoided, feminist poststructuralists regard the inability to fix our identities and to be known through them in any definitive way as a powerful means through which we can “denaturalize” ourselves and embrace change. (74)

In the three final articles, the emphasis shifts from the negative task of critiquing assorted critical pedagogies to the positive task of formulating feminist pedagogies. In “Feminist Pedagogy and Emancipatory Possibilities” by Jane Kenway and Helen Modra, “Interrupting Patriarchy: Politics, Resistance, and Transformation in the Feminist Classroom” by Magda Lewis, and “Women in the Academy: Strategy, Struggle, and Survival” by Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, the writing becomes much more particular, as the authors imagine possibilities and talk about concrete problems.

Even though Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy never focuses specifically on the teaching of writing, its attention to questions of voice and identity, gender and power, and poststructural feminist constructions of pedagogy makes it of great use to teachers reflecting on the teaching of writing.

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Recently, I conducted a series of workshops for non-commissioned officers on the “New Army Writing Style.” The old army style was characterized by acronyms, jargon, passive voice, pompous prose, and verbosity. Since the modern army runs on paper, the Pentagon mandated