the multifaceted reality and needs and lives of actual students is a defining characteristic of L2 writing research and instruction, so it is appropriate and encouraging to see this characteristic concern displayed so clearly in the book *On Second Language Writing*. Tony Silva and Paul Kei Matsuda are to be commended for editing this fine contribution to second language writing scholarship.

*San Francisco, California*


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Inspired by a similar collection in which 62 contemporary philosophers tell how they fell in love with philosophy, *Living Rhetoric and Composition* began as an invitation to established scholars in the field to tell “how they came to fall in love with the written word and with teaching” (xv). Framed by a brief foreword written by Andrea Lunsford and afterword by Jacqueline Jones Royster, and followed by an extensive annotated bibliography, the nineteen narratives collected in this volume give us the professional—and often intensely personal—life of the discipline as told from the first-person perspective of some of its most prominent scholars. The narratives themselves are as various as the voices that give life to them. Some of the contributors opt for hybrid forms that interweave the rhetoric of composition with other rhetorics: the rhetoric of the road (Theresa Enos), the rhetoric of Bob Barker (William Covino), or even the rhetoric of bear and elk tracks discovered in Graveyard Canyon, New Mexico (Stuart Brown). Others, like Richard Fulkerson’s “How Way Leads on to Way” or Edward Corbett’s “How I Became a Teacher of Composition,” seem to take their task more literally. All, however, manage to interweave the personal and the professional until it becomes difficult to tell them apart. And all demand to be read, not only for what they say about what it means to “make it” in this field, but also for how such stories go on making and remaking the field through the act of their telling.

In the preface to the collection, the editors state that they have “compiled this collection with multiple audiences in mind,” hoping to appeal to experienced scholars and novices alike. As their decision to append a bibliography titled “A Guide to Professional Development” might suggest, however, it is particularly with an eye toward joining the growing conversation on professionalization that this book seems to take its final shape. Recommending the book for courses in professional development
and composition methods, the editors express the hope that graduate students in particular “should find the book appealing as they begin to follow in the footsteps of people such as those who appear in this collection, many whose work these students study” (xvi-xvii). Reading it as a graduate student myself, I did indeed find Living Rhetoric and Composition appealing, not to mention instructive and, indeed, at times riveting. Yet, what I appreciated most about this collection—what made it at once so instructive and such a pleasure to read—was not the wisdom it dispensed or even, as the editors hope, the encouragement it gave me to “recognize that [I am] like the scholars included in this book” (xvii). For this is not the typical collection of comp tales or telling anecdotes. Nor is it an advice book, though all of its contributors obviously “speak from experience.” As the extensiveness of the bibliography alone suggests, rhetoric and composition may already have its fair share of both of these. Rather, what I appreciated most about this collection, and what I think makes it such a unique and much-needed contribution to the “professional development” of rhetoric and composition, lies more in the ways that it resists being any of these things—and, perhaps even more importantly, the ways in which it relentlessly reminds us that what we now confidently call “professional development” may not, after all, tell the whole story when it comes to accounting for how we “come to rhetoric and composition.”

For one thing, if this collection begins with the modest hope that “experienced scholars and teachers in rhetoric and composition will be interested in reading about some of the more visible members of the field” (xvi), it is not long before it slips into something much more sensational. “I could not put the book down. I read the whole thing, cover to cover, at one sitting,” confesses Rebecca Moore Howard on the back cover. “All these stories are fascinating,” the editors promise in their preface (xv). “The chapters here tell all,” writes Lunsford in the book’s foreword (xi). This is, after all, at root a collection of love stories, from Janice Lauer’s slow-killing romance with “Rhetorica” to Vitanza’s whorish rapture with the “RhErotics” through whom “we are called to love and to lust” (155). And even the most mundane and matter-of-fact of these “stories of the discipline” seems to have a certain life, almost surprised quality to it. “Ahem,” Wendy Bishop writes more than a fourth of the way through her story. “I have used up more than 4,000 of my 4,000 words, and I am only just starting my doctorate program!” (33). No doubt this, too, has something to do with the difficulty of the original “assignment”: here are, after all, nineteen highly seasoned scholars suddenly being asked to account in 4,000 words or less for their presence in a field that takes that presence for granted.

At the same time, if, as Theresa Enos insists, “[m]emory is history,” (75), then the stories collected here might also be said to compose something
of a history. Arranged in loose chronological order, together they are meant to “provide a sense of the changes, the historical development of the profession as it has been transformed over the last 50 years” (xvi). Certainly these nineteen narratives flesh out the major themes that have defined, and that go on defining, rhetoric and composition’s institutional history. As Lunsford notes, “the familiar narratives of ‘rhet/comp’ are here”: the institutional battles for prestige and professional resources; the impact of the GI Bill and open admissions on writing instruction; that shaky first semester of teaching; “the battles for tenure and promotion . . . always the battles for tenure and promotion,” sighs Lunsford (xii). Unlike the knowing tones in which such themes are usually handled, however, the history that emerges here makes no attempt to conceal the traces of its status as mere memories—and thus as always plural, sometimes contradictory, entirely situated.

For while each of the contributions might be said to represent a particular “way of knowing” how one “comes to rhetoric and composition,” there is also a way in which each one also represents a particular way of not knowing—indeed, of never quite being able to know for sure—just how we got here. Indeed, one of the most fascinating motifs to emerge in the volume might be the continual reminder that, as Vitanza puts it with his own brand of mocking humility, there’s just no accounting for one’s love (much less one’s lust). Often taking on a structure as comic as it is epic, the struggles and events and achievements that make up these “stories of the discipline” seem strung together almost as much by accident as much as by acts of will. Richard Lloyd-Jones, Ed White, Richard Fulkerson—all explicitly plot their stories as “a series of accidents” and “serendipity.” Edward Corbett discovers rhetoric by accident one day when he stumbles across Hugh Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. And even for Stuart Brown, “a second-generation rhetorian . . . trained by rhetoricians and imbued with both the history of rhetoric and the rich flowing of the profession in the 1970s and 1980s, . . . [r]hetoric happened as a happy accident” (201). Similarly, if it weren’t for the fire that destroyed his family’s barn in January 1962, Duane Roen might still be the Wisconsin farm boy he started out as (123), and if it had not been for leaving graduate school to do political work, John Trimbur probably never “even would have become a writing teacher” (130). And then there is Wendy Bishop, who, despite all the tough decisions it took to get there, still finds that she has trouble accounting for how she and her officemates actually ended up teaching composition: “They are, I am, very bright, but it seems to me that we have arrived in our offices and our authority more by life accident than by intention” (29).

So many accidents tend to foreground the question that any really good guide to professional development strives to answer once and for all: namely, just how does one find oneself in rhetoric and composition? The
overwhelming answer that emerges from these narratives is that, whatever else it is — profession, field, discipline — rhetoric and composition is always also a "calling." And a powerful one indeed: "It is difficult, if not impossible, . . . to avoid a theological notion of calling (vocation)," writes Vitanza. "As much as we rhetors try or say quite adamantly that 'I will not!' engage in such thinking, we are called back" (145). Perhaps it is this almost theological notion of how one finds/comes to/is called to rhetoric and composition that accounts for the "always already" feeling that seems to drive so many of these narratives. For whether figured as an "American dream" (D'Angelo) or simply a "continual foraging for ideas" (Kinneavy); as a player in the "great drama of literacy" (Bazerman) or simply the next best thing to being a game show host (Covino); as a matter of Zen (Coe) or simply a matter of "doing as one likes" (Lloyd-Jones), the portrait of the field that emerges here is one in which all of the contributors seem so simply and inevitably to have found themselves — and to continue to find themselves — in every relevant sense of that phrase. And, indeed, this collection issues a seductive call of its own, inviting young scholars to find "comfort" in the recognition "that they are like the scholars and teachers included in the book" (xvii).

Yet there is also a way in which the narratives that make up Living Rhetoric and Composition interrupt that call before we can become accustomed to it. "Many are called; few are chosen!" barks Vitanza (albeit parenthetically) in his contribution. Bishop puts it with equal candor, if a bit more gently (145). "We are a community. Access is not simple or assured" (35). And, indeed: though explicitly taken up by only a few of the contributors, the question of access — as a question — haunts the margins of all these narratives. Perhaps most strikingly, despite the editors' intention to "represent the variety of the camps that now compose the diverse discipline of rhetoric and composition" (xv), there nonetheless remain some notable absences in the collection. The table of contents alone is telling: the contributors include fourteen white men and five white women. The editors note this "limitation" in their preface and attribute it largely to accidents and oversights inherent in the nature of the project itself:

Our discipline is growing and changing and diversifying at a startling pace. And we did try to include more women and people of color in this volume to portray this dynamic. Unfortunately, a number of contributors dropped out of the project, primarily women and people of color, which upset the more equitable portrayal for which we strove. As for class issues, we simply failed to recognize this inherent discrimination in the purpose of our project. (xvi)
Rather than reading this apparent oversight so simply as a failure of this volume to represent the field with anything like the accuracy it set out to do, however, perhaps we might consider whether this volume may in fact be more representative than we might like to think—if not in actual numbers, then at least in terms of who really “counts.” It may indeed be true that the discipline is “growing and changing and diversifying at a startling pace.” But it may also be true that what makes that pace so startling in the first place is the fact that, as Kathleen Welch puts it so vividly in her contribution to the volume, “we in composition/rhetoric face a problem that confronts all our colleagues. Curricula, students, and faculty remain so white that we appear to be a blizzard” (168). Likewise, the fact that this collection of “scholars who have found a lifelong commitment to the teaching of writing” (xv) excludes entirely the voices of those who actually teach the majority of writing courses—the GTAs and adjuncts whose stories are just beginning to be told in collections like Sheryl Fontaine and Susan Hunter’s Writing Ourselves into the Story and in studies like Eileen Schell’s Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers—might speak volumes not just about Living Rhetoric and Composition, but about living rhetoric and composition. At the very least, it seems worthwhile to wonder why a disproportionate number of women and people of color, as the editors put it, “dropped out” of the project after having initially answered its call.

Finally, however, I would suggest that such a lack of diversity need not necessarily detract from what is already so present in this collection. For we do well to remember that the very status of these stories as stories—plural, incomplete, transitory, situated—means that these tell-all narratives can never really tell all. Rather, to note what is missing is to read this collection as a call for still others, as well a reminder of the imperative that, as Welch puts it, “composition/rhetoric scholar-teachers [must] weave gender, ethnic, and race issues into all our classes, all our histories, and all our research” and, even more importantly, “recruit persons from underrepresented groups into our ranks” (163). Indeed, to hear this call is to remember and to hope and finally to ensure that there are new stories of the discipline in our near future: stories that provide us with new ways of knowing how we are called and when we have “arrived.” And, along with those new ways of knowing rhetoric and composition, new ways of living it.

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Works Cited