of actual thinking, feeling, breathing people” (212, 213). Hill’s (self-)reflective narrative legitimately considers pedagogy’s human(e) dimensions, but because of its reflective character, the essay provides little tangible direction regarding how to develop a curriculum. What might writing assignments look like? What particular chords should instructors strike in facilitating students’ efforts? Likewise, in “Kairos” Phillip Sipiora twice mentions the ways in which rhetorical grammar informs kairos; however, the point receives no sustained attention, even though it underlies his argument about the Biblical New Testament. As with other essays in the collection, Sipiora’s provokes, but it never quite moves readers beyond the specific topics/texts being investigated.

I raise these final concerns, despite the volume’s overall usefulness, because of context’s importance to the work of James L. Kinneavy, who (as the foreword notes) passed away before this volume was released. His “Kairos” in Classical and Modern Rhetorical Theory” serves him in good stead, a tribute to his devotion to kairos. Whatever else readers make of the collection, we would do well to remember Kinneavy’s contributions and to support the project for which he agitated so vigorously:

I am firmly convinced that rhetoric desperately needs the notion of kairos. I have made several pleas for its reincorporation into the systematic study of composition, because I see it as a dominant motif in disciplines related to our own . . . . The concept of situational context, which is a modern term for kairos, is in the forefront of research and thought in many areas. . . . [I]t may be that modern treatments of situational context can learn something from the handling of the same topic in antiquity. I would argue that they can, particularly in the realms of the ethical and the educational. (74 n4)

Kinneavy believed that words matter in the world, but he also recognized that the world matters as much to words, for no text escapes its time(s) and timing, even as writers may struggle to reach some unknown posterity.

Mansfield, OH


Reviewed by William DeGenaro, Miami University, Hamilton

For several years I have wondered why, despite the numerous historical accounts of college composition in the United States, our field has not produced a
comprehensive history of basic writing. Andrea Lunsford’s 1977 dissertation, *An Historical, Descriptive, and Evaluative Study of Remedial English in the United States*, remains one of the few scholarly explorations of basic writing that employs historical methods. As the dissertation title implies, however, history is not Lunsford’s only—or even primary—concern. Many consider Mina Shaughnessy’s iconic *Errors and Expectations*, along with Adrienne Rich’s practitioner account of teaching writing under the open admissions policy at the City University of New York, to be *historical documents*, representations of a crucial moment in the disciplinary development of basic writing. Yet Shaughnessy and Rich also eschew historical narrative. Ira Shor has contributed a great deal to our disciplinary knowledge about the historical trajectory of basic writing, situating the course within Composition’s legacy of elitism and exclusion (“Our Apartheid”) and also tracing the invocation of the concept of “correctness” during the 1970s and beyond (“Errors and Economics”). Methodologically, though, Shor’s scholarship leans more toward critique. In my own work I have turned to the history of two-year colleges to understand the origins of remediation in higher education (“Social Utility”) but have probably produced institutional, not curricular, history. In short, no documentary history or historical narrative has provided a thorough, definitive study historicizing basic writing.

*The Politics of Remediation* is not that book, but Mary Soliday does push basic writing research in the right direction. She argues that the basic writing edifice most often resolves political and institutional tensions instead of responding to a priori student needs. Specifically, she points out that remedial instruction facilitates the tiering of higher education, helping institutions to remain selective but also make claims about serving community members. “The unselective institution exists,” she argues, “in order to maintain democratic access without damaging selectivity in a hierarchical system” (13). Yet the academic and public rhetorics that surround remediation emphasize the individual at the expense of critical-contextual conversations about the ideological utility of the whole enterprise. Although Soliday acknowledges the value of centering our gaze on students, she offers a useful and compelling analysis of how liberal academics tend to paint *individual* remedial students as coming from cultures incompatible with academic cultures, thereby othering basic writers. Conservative critics, meanwhile, articulate unproblematized conceptions of assimilation, stating an imperative for individuals to renounce their former linguistic habits.

Soliday suggests that a greater historical consciousness could help us avoid these reductive conclusions about individual basic writers. Too often we buy into the myths that remediation is new and, by extension, “good writing” is an objective and timeless notion. Remedial measures existed. Soliday states, before the City University of New York created an open-admissions policy in the 1960s. She proceeds to offer a fascinating, if somewhat surface, sketch of such measures from the 1870s to the present, discussing the use of “conditioning” (giving less able students a year to make up for “deficiencies” before enrollment) policies dating
back to the nineteenth century as well as placement tests and high-stakes graduation requirements. Soliday traces the ebb and flow of remediation throughout the twentieth century, as colleges and universities responded to literacy crises with back-to-basics programs and managed periods of rapid growth through “differentiation”: the creation of campuses with varying degrees of prestige. The recurring theme that Soliday locates is the tendency of institutions to make decisions about remediation based on good public relations (responding to literacy crisis rhetoric), profits (generating cash cow enrollments in mandated classes), and enrollment management (creating further barriers during periods of growth)—as opposed to student needs. Looking at the entire historical time period allows Soliday to illustrate what she calls the “always newness” of remediation. Each time the culture frets about poor writing skills, popular myth implies the problem is new, allowing the blame to fall on students.

Soliday turns her attention to Shaughnessy and reviews the myriad critiques of the trailblazer. A useful synthesis of the literature that accuses Shaughnessy of valorizing academic language and culture, this section of the book may prove tedious for readers already familiar with basic writing scholarship. Soliday suggests that Shaughnessy critics like Joseph Harris, Bruce Horner, and Min-Zhan Lu have failed to account for Shaughnessy’s institutional work, focusing too much attention on *Errors and Expectations* and other published accounts. Soliday looks at primary texts documenting her work at CUNY and finds that Shaughnessy advocated for pedagogies and institutional reforms more progressive than those suggested in her seminal book. Again, Soliday’s critique is that we fail to focus on institutional politics and contexts when we think about basic writing. Institutional analysis, like historical inquiry, can provide methodological alternatives and help basic writing scholars transcend myths of individuality. In the 1980s, the discourse surrounding remediation often engaged in “a politics of agency . . . [attributing] problems that public higher education faced throughout the decade to students—in New York, to their inability to assimilate to mainstream cultures—and to the ‘expensive’ programs designed to meet their ‘special’ needs” (106). Although critics paint a picture of a working-class ethos at odds with the ethos of higher education, Soliday finds that institutional forces, more than cultural deficits, impact persistence and success among first-generation college students and members of the working class.

According to Soliday, the 1990s saw de facto segregation, as higher education engaged in further tiering through techniques such as the outsourcing of basic writing to two-year colleges and even for-profit teaching ventures (111). The past decade saw many middle-prestige schools toughen admissions standards while federal education funds decreased, resulting in students and parents pledging even greater allegiance to high-standards rhetorics. Soliday suggests that members of the middle class want higher education to be a site of rigor and even exclusion, so that they can feel secure—and exclusive. She claims that media reports during the decade connected the loosening of admissions standards to student movements of the 1960s (especially among students of color) while even left-leaning basic writing
scholarship affirmed “underclass imagery” (135). She points to scholars such as Deborah Mutnick as heirs to Shaughnessy and Rich, well-meaning but inadvertently contributing to myths of cultural deficit. Urging the field to investigate the local with an eye on situating basic writers in their institutional contexts, Soliday writes, “We need more research and specific case studies of the political roles that remediation plays at colleges” (143).

Soliday ends her book with an analysis of working-class and minority writers whose textual identities straddle mainstream academe but also maintain a stance of resistance. She urges teachers of basic writing to explore pedagogies of translation, wherein students engage in rhetorically aware code switching. Ultimately, Soliday wants teachers and students “to transcreate new knowledge and identities out of a negotiation—possibly a fusion—between different cultures” (148). She describes various, highly useful pedagogical strategies such as literacy and intercultural narratives that transcend linear progressions from one culture to another, exploring the legitimacy, fluidity, and hybridity of both worlds. This final chapter, though engaging, seemed disjointed from the historical narratives of previous chapters. Clearly Soliday was exploring the classroom space to illustrate the implications of remediation’s “always newness” and offer border pedagogies that resist that problematic trend. Still, I felt as if Soliday had begun to uncover important historical antecedents of basic writing as we know it and wanted even more detail, more primary documentation. As a field we have much literature exploring border pedagogies but basic writing history is lacking. Soliday’s book nicely complements Lunsford and Shor. The breadth of her historical scope is impressive, particularly given the scarcity of resources specifically addressing developmental writing. Now we need someone to connect the dots in greater depth and move beyond CUNY, looking at remediation and basic writing’s curricular and disciplinary development at both four-year and two-year colleges, land-grant universities and regional campuses, in all geographical locales in the nation. How about a book similar in scope to John Brereton’s excellent documentary history of college composition that specifically addresses remedial English? Soliday has provided the foundation and the impetus.

Hamilton, OH

WORKS CITED


Reviewed by Beth Brunk-Chavez, The University of Texas at El Paso

As I was flying home from a conference, a particularly chatty person next to me saw the title of Kurt Spellmeyer’s book: *Arts of Living*. Curious, she asked what kind of self-help book I was reading. I briefly explained to her that this was a different kind of book—one of the “academic sort.” Of course, the conversation ended there. However, after finishing the text and pondering it for many days, I’m left to wonder if her question wasn’t more astute than I initially thought. Spellmeyer’s *Arts of Living*, after all, has altered the ways I think about my research, my teaching, my purpose for working and being inside the academy.

After reading and thinking about chapter 6, I realized why the book is titled *Arts of Living*—here is where, at least for me, he fleshes out the connection between humanities and life—or rather the disconnection that the academy has created. Of course, these connections are present throughout the first five chapters.

As Spellmeyer warns from the first sentence of the text, “the humanities must change” if they are to survive (3). The largest issue, he finds, is that the humanities have become completely removed from the worlds outside the academy. Spellmeyer’s argument isn’t a new one. Lisa Ruddick’s *Chronicle* article “The Near Enemy of the Humanities is Professionalism” argues that “for years, literary scholarship has been refining the art of stepping away from humane connection” (B7). She cites then MLA president Linda Hutcheon’s address that “condemns our current way of doing business as intellectually cliquish, arrogant, and competitive.” There are a good number of similar cries. What makes Spellmeyer’s *Arts of Living* singular in its approach, however, is the care he takes in tracing the way the humanities have gotten into this situation.

He gives us an incredibly detailed education into how the humanities as a discipline began and who some of the academic forerunners are, an education