of her other suggestions might actually look like in concrete form. I found
myself wishing, for example, for a sample of a revised participation policy
that took student quietness into account, or somehow graded student par-
ticipation in ways other than ones that were speech-based.

Ultimately, Reda’s book offers important alternative ways of thinking
about the use of dialogue and discussion in our classrooms and of the role
of quietness and quiet students. While she does not (and cannot) solve all of
the challenges of having quiet students in the classroom, she throws down
the gauntlet to instructors to analyze their own discourse, and to re-think
and re-vision their classroom in more inclusive, more productive ways.

Morristown, New Jersey

Work Cited

Samet, Elizabeth. Soldier’s Heart: Reading Literature Through Peace and War at

The Two Virtuals: New Media and Composition, by

Rev. by Cheri Lemieux Spiegel, Northern Virginia Community College

As the fall semester comes to a close, I’m struck by unique challenges and
victories afforded me as a result of technology. This semester, more than those
prior it, I have puzzled at how to best serve my students, who have largely
developed their communication skills in a discourse community heavily influ-
enced by text messages, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, and Facebook. On the one
hand, I fight my gut impulse to “fix” the students’ tendencies to compose in
“text speak” and cringe at the usage of “u” to symbolize “you.” At the same
time, I find myself fascinated with the potential opportunities new technolo-
gies such as podcasting, digital imaging software, and blogs might bring to
my classroom. I wonder at how to make the technology work for me and my
students rather than against us. I am curious whether new composing tools
and delivery methods, such as Twitter and YouTube, will allow students to
convey or construct meaning in as rich or perhaps richer means than what
has been possible to me through the traditional print-based essay.

These concerns are not new to me nor our discipline. With each new
development in technology, those in Rhetoric and Composition are tasked
with adapting to strengthen pedagogy and better use the resources newly
available. In The Two Virtuals, Alexander Reid responds to this perennial
need to adapt to the ever growing expanse of technology with an approach
to composition that is based on an understanding of materiality, not based upon a specific technology form. Reid’s chief accomplishment, for a writing instructor such as myself, is his ability to redefine the purpose and potential of technology based upon its history and the nature of its interaction with humanity. Reid’s provides a greatly needed foundation through which one may understand technology and the complex and reciprocal nature of humanity’s interaction with the technologies in their lives.

To begin the construction of this foundation, Reid begins with the definitions of the title concept: the two virtuals. The first portion of the piece focuses on the first virtual—the “virtual-technological.” This virtual is a term most readers will find “quite familiar,” since it refers to the form of “virtual reality produced by modern computing—the broad range of technologies from cell phones to mainframes” (3). Reid’s discussion of the virtual-technological starts with a thorough treatment of its history, which begins with the emergence of symbolic behavior and concludes with the development of more contemporary media applications.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe the recursive nature through which writing and cognition have developed over centuries of time. As writing technology evolves, cognitive processes mirror this development. In a similar manner, cognition evolves as advances in technology enter into a culture. For example, Reid explores how the development of written texts allowed for the study of language in a way never possible prior to these texts. Philosophic concepts, for one, were only made possible through the arrival of the written word. As advancements in writing technology continued they created a more concrete means to express cognitive processes and thus led to further advancements in technology.

However, Reid maintains that our understanding of our own consciousness, as expressed through these technologies (the typewriter or camera, for example), is always fragmented—merely a “partial apprehension of the material world”—because the technology is unable to capture the continuous materiality of existence or cognition (55). This “partial apprehension of the material world” is the source of great anxiety, because, similar to Lacan’s mirror stage, we must continuously reconcile the necessarily fractured product of our media with the illusion of “wholeness” (54). Reid then shows, in chapters 4 and 5, how this anxiety is only accentuated with the rise of cybernetic theory and the arrival of modern computing and new media.

Having developed the reader’s understanding of the virtual-technological and the anxiety developed through its fragmented recording of materiality, Reid devotes the later portion of the text (chapters 6 through 9) to the second, more complex virtual. Reid refers to this virtual as the “virtual-actual.” This virtual is seated within philosophical roots, rather than technological ones. It is “a theory of materiality and thought, a theory of composition (of the way in which thoughts compose as media and media composes as thought)”
Through his treatment of the second virtual, Reid provides readers with the tools to approach their usage of the “virtual-technological” in ways that will better account for the fragmented apprehension of the material world.

In chapter 6, Reid begins to discuss space as continuous and mutational rather than discrete and fixed. This discussion describes how the virtual-actual can shape our understanding of the role technology, particularly new media, plays in our development of ideas and compositions. Rather than envisioning technology as a means to translate our cognition into a new form, Reid’s treatment encourages the reader to understand the interface between human and machine in a new way. In this new way, we see technology as a continued space through which information can be accessed and manipulated, rather than a place to transmit and store information.

Using this idea of the interface between human and machine, Reid develops in chapter 7 a theory of composition that he refers to as rip/mix/burn. As the name would suggest, this theory is composed of three stages: ripping, mixing, and burning. Ripping refers to gathering information from sources. These sources might be one’s own memories, things one is actively experiencing or items learned through the media already created by others. Mixing then refers to the stage wherein the items that were previously ripped are examined for their potential for further usage in new ways. Burning, like the burning of a CD or DVD, is the stage wherein the product is translated and prepared for communication. While these three terms have been used to describe composition in the realm of the virtual-technological for some time, Reid sees them as having great potential when applied to the continuous and mutational reality of the virtual actual.

In the two final chapters of his book, Reid brings his discussion out of the theoretical realm and begins to suggest its application to the concerns of the university campus. Chapter 9 expands the scope of Reid’s discussion beyond the writing classroom to the university at large. While this discussion is interesting, it is in his eighth chapter that Reid suggests the means through which the rip/mix/burn strategies might be applied to the writing classroom. He provides examples of how this process is currently at work in classrooms and its potential if used effectively. The true strength of his practical application, as I alluded earlier, is in the fact that his plan is not technology specific. Rather than suggesting an approach to integrating PowerPoint or some specific technology into the curriculum, Reid provides a theoretical approach that will shape our understanding of technology and thus its role in our classroom. I found these suggestions for practice particularly useful in the context of my concerns regarding classroom related technologies.

The Two Virtuals is thought provoking and earns its place among foundational Rhetoric and Composition texts through its ability to reconcile the contemporary challenges of our classrooms with the complex nature of materiality. I recommend this source to teachers of rhetoric and composition.
who find themselves puzzled at how to best approach evolving technologies deeply rooted in our classrooms, and, like me, are looking for a tool to help them make sense of it all.

Annandale, Virginia


Reviewed by Cara Minardi, Georgia State University

The term “feminist pedagogy” is difficult to define clearly, and I had almost given up on claiming the term because I found it impossible to synthesize a workable definition from our scholarship. The term is used in many ways, and the goals of feminist scholars vary greatly; I feared my definition would oversimplify the complexities and richness of feminist pedagogy or the scholarship of it. What’s more, I had come to the point where I could no longer distinguish feminist pedagogy from those considered good teaching practices in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Luckily, I found and read *Composing Feminisms: How Feminists Have Shaped Composition Theories and Practices* by Kay Siebler, who accomplished what I was trying to do; she distinguishes feminist pedagogy from liberatory and critical pedagogies, as well as what is commonly accepted as good teaching practices. This important book establishes, in a broad sense, the variety of definitions of feminist pedagogy from the 1970s to 1990s. Because it traces practices of feminist pedagogies, this work should be part of every feminist teacher’s library.

This book clarifies not only good practices of feminist approaches in the classroom, but in reviewing feminist pedagogical scholarship over thirty years, Siebler also demonstrates how feminist pedagogy is central to our field—a new contribution. Siebler argues, “feminism is not a ‘special’ category in composition, but [is] infused in mainstream composition theory and practice, although not recognized as such” (4). Siebler hopes to rectify the erasure in order to give credit to feminist scholars who have changed composition theory and praxis. In addition, because the text traces the history of feminist pedagogy, it provides important background in order for feminist compositionists to contribute scholarship that moves in new directions.

The book is broken into six chapters. The first two chapters, “Trying to Figure it Out: When Rapunzel Escapes the Tower and Runs Amuck” and “A Historical Representation of Feminist Pedagogy: The Sixteen Themes Defining Feminist Pedagogy,” are the stars of the book because they ground the themes