*Third Edition*

# CROSS-TALK IN COMP THEORY

## A READER

EDITED BY
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# Preface to the Third Edition

## FROM VICTOR

My father was a mechanic for the army during World War II. And he used to state proudly that he had attended a school for auto mechanics under the GI Bill (essentially, his ninth-grade education). So he would tell me about cars, and as a good son, I would listen. I got the basics of the internal combustion engine. So I know that that squeaky sound under the hood means a belt needs tightening and that the jerkiness of the chassis means time for new plugs or distributor (and usually both). I listen to Click and Clack on NPR on Sundays and usually guess right before Tom and Ray finish chortling. But for all of that, I can't say that I know anything really about cars, apart from being glad to own one (fossil fuel issues notwithstanding).

My relation with cars is somewhat analogous to my relation with computers. I worked as a computer operator when I was eighteen years old, the Honeywell H200, one of the seven competitors to IBM. And even as I worked for an IBM competitor, I started to learn FORTRAN (but dropped out) and began to learn (well, for a few weeks) what would become Pascal, even took a night course on programming (which I never finished). I wrote my dissertation on the first Apple model. Did DOS a few years later, and friends across the nation and I tried to figure out how to make email work in 1992. Returned to Apple in 1995, even as a friend who worked for Microsoft told me that there would be no Apple in a couple of years. And now when things explode (remember the little Mac bomb?), I tend to figure my way around. I don't shout obscenities at the machine; I go "hmm." Yet my interest in computers, apart from my "driving" them, was never piqued. So while there has been a conversation going on in composition studies for as long as I've been in this profession, I have been willfully deaf.

But I have students who force me to think about computer gaming or the new ways ideologies are represented in digital media, hypertextually. Just

two examples: Chris Ritter had me consider how racial stereotypes are morphed into racialized stereotypes in the avatars of *World of Warcraft*, and Paul Muhlhauser looked to all kinds of representations in the human gamete industry. Patty Ericsson makes my head spin as she tells of discussions she assumes I know about—but don't. And through her students I learn of the rhetorics of bureaucracy in a digitized world. Jason Farman had me look at "mobile interface theory." Kristin Arola makes me think of Web design and identity. I read, discuss, and learn.

The discussions concerning computers and composition studies are rich, and have been for some time. So we offer one more edition of *Cross-Talk*, to include a glimpse at the conversation concerning the digital paradigm. But since I can't really compensate for a quarter-century of ignorance, I have asked a colleague, Kristin Arola, to help me out. She did more than help, however. She constructed the new Section Six of the collection—"Virtual Talk." In keeping with the basic premise of this book, this section is not comprehensive, but is, rather, fuel with which to prime the pump: some talk and some cross-talk, the utopic and the dystopic, maybe.

Otherwise, the collection remains pretty much the same, some additions and some deletions to reflect current conversations (and to satisfy publisher-imposed page limits). My hope—our hope, Kristin's and mine—is that this collection will continue to serve the needs of those coming into the conversations in our community of theorists of the teaching of writing.

## FROM KRISTIN

*Cross-Talk* has always been with me: in the hallways of Northern Arizona University as a wide-eyed first-year master's student; at my family holiday dinners when I tried to explain what it was that I was actually *doing* in graduate school; and as I wrote my dissertation at Michigan Tech, when I tried to place my work within a larger narrative of composition studies. Yet I often found myself holding the history of composition in one hand and the history of computers and writing in the other. We all come from similar training, and we all are concerned with how to best teach first-year composition, but at times I found it difficult to pull these two strands together.

Truthfully, for me, coming of age in the digital era and going to graduate school when you couldn't swing a dead cat without hitting a PhD student whose research focused on digital-or-visual-something-or-other, I found it easy to stick with the computers and writing canon. I knew that Composition (capital C) and Computers and Writing (capital CW) were

inextricable, yet the latter felt like the sexy choice. Even today, I feel this pull when I choose one conference over another, or read one journal over the other. Yet I think there's a lot to be learned when we place folks like Donald Murray alongside Cindy Selfe, or James Berlin alongside Richard Ohmann. They might not be talking directly to each other, but if we listen closely enough we'll hear the resonances and the dissonances, and perhaps be able to see how the digital is not, and should not be, relegated to its own corner of the field.

As Victor has (repeatedly) reminded me, it is nearly impossible to encapsulate thirty years of conversation in six essays. Yet I hope the essays that constitute Section Six create a cross-talk not only with one another, but also with the other pieces in the collection. We need to be talking with one another and finding connections, because even if we don't research the digital, it informs, and is, the stuff with which we work every day.

# Preface to the Second Edition

Second editions are like movie sequels. And I don't figure I've got a Part II to *The Godfather* or *Aliens*. But the profession has continued to move ahead, so the sequel to *Cross-Talk* seems like a good idea. One of the editors kept referring to it as "Son of Cross-Talk."

The acorn hasn't landed far from the tree, though. The book isn't all that different from the first edition. It's still divided into the same categories. My biases remain my biases, though as in the first edition, I try to remain true to the profession by giving preference to essays that are most frequently cited. And as in the first edition, there are a lot of interesting things going on in composition studies that don't get addressed, things like empirical research, assessment, or linguistics.

But some things have happened since I conducted the research for the first edition in 1992 to 1994. The most remarkable has been the technological explosion, with new software packages that affect our work coming out weekly, or so it seems, and with the pervasiveness of the Internet and its World Wide Web. The Net changed the way I conducted the research for this volume, a two-year process reduced to a few weeks on computerized databases and journal archives on the Web—often with whole texts available at the stroke of a few keys. Yet for all that, it doesn't appear as if technology has made its way into our theoretical discussions. Despite the great work of Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher, not much has emerged in our journals that can stand the test of time—not because of any shortcoming in our scholars but because of the speed with which the things written about become archaic, this morning's innovation becoming this evening's anachronism. Technology has been included in this version, but not significantly, surely not as significantly as its presence in our lives would suggest.

In a very real sense, *Cross-Talk* is intended as a historical artifact, a way of tracking theoretical discussions in a field that continues to find itself forming its theoretical foundations. Even the givens of comp—writing as process—are contending with cross-talk, like post-process theory. It's hard to track the history we're in.

The other big change in composition studies—at least in our journals—has been the increased presence of writers of color and the greater acceptance of critical pedagogy. As I point out in the final essay to this volume, writers of color are still not present in this profession in the kinds of numbers that would affect our discussions on racism in truly meaningful ways, but something did happen in the second half of the 1990s: the beginnings of rich discussion on racism clearly centered on the concerns of this profession (a somewhat different set of discussions on racism from those which took place in journals like *College English* at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century).

Readers of the first edition will likely miss the discussion between Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae. It was, I recognize, an interesting discussion centering on academic discourse versus other kinds of writing. It's gone because the discussion has taken a different turn—the personal versus the academic. That discussion has its representatives here, through Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie, through Jacqueline Jones Royster, and in some sense through Richard Miller. Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman broaden the discussion on feminism. And service learning is introduced, a relatively new entry into the conversation on composition.

Composition studies has moved on. New students are learning of our field, a field still in flux, still growing. It was time to account for the 1990s in the conversation, in the talk and cross-talk. Something gets lost with a sequel, I know, even a good sequel. Robert De Niro might have been great, but I missed Brando. Some of the Brandos will be missed in Son of Cross-Talk, but I trust this sequel will continue to serve, to initiate graduate students and more experienced teachers into the theories that inform composition studies.

# Preface to the First Edition

I wanted to prepare a healthier pancake for the children. The whole-wheat recipe in the healthier cookbook hadn't quite gone over. But my adjustments made for pretty pancakes that came out, time and again, uncooked at the center. I figured I'd better add another egg to the batter next time around. And that worked. That egg added just the touch more leavening the batter needed, the touch more air to cook the batter through. If I had wanted to go just a bit healthier, I could have substituted that egg with two egg whites, beaten to a froth, since the fat of the yolk wouldn't have been necessary to the batter, as it would have been for, say, a custard. I made healthy pancakes that the kids would (and did and do) eat.

The point is this: I could adjust, take control of the process, because I had an understanding of how eggs work in cooking. I understood the theory.

But then, theories of leavening have been pretty well worked out. Theories of written composition have not. And operating from the gut, what feels right, what sounds right, what might be fun for the students, can too easily lead to theoretical contradictions. And students know. I don't know how they know, but they seem to sense or maybe outwardly recognize theoretical inconsistencies, reacting too often with passive compliance, never arriving at the full benefits possible in engaging—really engaging—in written discourse.

What those benefits of literacy might be aren't exactly clear, though. Plato tells of the god Thoth claiming that writing would be the key to remembrance. And writing was, we are told, used as a memory aid, a mnemonic device. In recent times, as we will find in the articles to follow, writing has been credited with learning, cognitive development, social cohesion, political power. What writing can provide has never been altogether clear.

So composition studies has divided itself, either to find out what writing is, or how to teach it better, or to discern the degree to which it either removes or bestows power. Composition studies finds its historicists (with some compositionists as revisionist historicists), current-traditionalists, cognitivists, expressionists, social-constructionists (who tend also to be epistemicists), empiricists, anti-foundationalists, and leftists, among others. Academic books

on composition studies tend to historicize, theorize, polemicize, or synthesize, as well as proselytize. Composition is complex and diverse.

But with the greater diversity and sophistication has come greater confusion. I have seen teachers come to accept writing as a process, a commonenough notion nowadays, without recognizing the theoretical bases to different approaches to process. I have heard a new compositionist on the job market betray his confusion, claiming a Marxist bent, yet aligning himself with Kenneth Bruffee and Peter Elbow—highly respected compositionists, but hardly representatives of the political left. Another candidate clearly knew research on composition (for which there are several good collections) but seemed not to know of the philosophical objections to classical-empirical research. The overwhelming majority of candidates—even those fortunate enough to study with prestigious compositionists—seem unable to navigate their ways through composition's currents.

What follows, then, is an aid for you—the teacher of graduate composition theory, the graduate student of composition, the veteran teacher of composition back in the graduate comp course. What follows is a book of readings whose objective is to introduce you to some of the concepts and methods available to writing teachers today and to have you regard some of the controversy. This is a reader of previously published works, mainly by those who tend to be mentioned in the works of others. The book's further objective is to have you begin to consider your own predispositions toward language, discourse, writing, and writing instruction, predispositions which can then be considered critically and discussed knowledgeably. The list of suggested readings adds book-length considerations. With the books I have suggested, the books and articles cited in the essays that pique your interest, and the essays themselves, you should be able to come up with quite the pancake recipe, something you can swallow.

I mention the readings and the works the essays themselves cite because, though this book is comprehensive, it is not complete. It is not intended to establish a canon of comp. It's an overview, manageable within an academic quarter or semester. So the readings contained herein do not encompass all there is to composition studies. There are gaps. Writing across the curriculum is absent. Linguistics is minimally represented, which means there is little here on research on those who come into the classroom speaking a nonstandard dialect or those whose primary language is other than English (which includes sociolinguistic and applied linguistic studies of the hundreds of American Indian languages still spoken in the United States today). There is little on grammar, and the current discussions on multiculturalism and the comp classroom aren't explicitly represented. But all of these concerns really are here, in large terms, in the

theoretical discussions concerning those who have been traditionally excluded or underrepresented in the academy.

Nor is evaluation explicitly represented. I know that the teacher is always concerned with evaluation and assessment. And how a teacher decides to respond, evaluate, and grade essays should be a reflection of the philosophy or theory of writing that the classroom curriculum embodies. But the subject of evaluation is large, almost another theoretical sphere, more concerned with what you do with writing in the classroom than with what writing is or even what writing instruction might be. I've relegated evaluation to the list of suggested readings. In other words, to learn more you'll still have to read those more complete academic books on composition contained in the list of readings or mentioned in the collection. But after going through this book, you will have a sense of who you might want to read. This book is intended as a primer, drops to activate the pump.

Selection suggests a selector, one with particular biases. But though my own biases in selecting the readings will no doubt come through, no single viewpoint is presented. The readings are presented in such a way as to establish a dialectic—a way for you to come to your own conclusions by considering opposing viewpoints. The process approach espoused in the first section receives a critical assessment in the "Mulligan Stew" article. Walter Ong provides a necessary reconsideration of product. The cognitive explanations of basic writers' problems advanced by Andrea Lunsford and by Frank D'Angelo are countered by Mike Rose's article on cognitive development. Cognitive explanations generally are countered by social-construction's explanations, with Patricia Bizzell explicitly drawing the comparison, offering the critique; both the cognitivist and the social-constructionist become subject to ideological critiques. Points find counterpoints throughout the book—talk and cross-talk.

Some articles will address matters of race or ethnicity, gender, the poor or working class. Considerations of race and the like have had a great deal to do with establishing the theoretical controversies. One compositionist of note, at least, Maxine Hairston, has argued that our changing theories of composition are in part the result of the introduction into our college classrooms of those we have come to call basic writers, those who come to college not quite prepared to undertake college writing, most often people of color and the poor. There are always a few in every composition classroom, at every level, from first-year college students to seniors. To ponder how composition might affect the more troublesome, those basic writers, would inform our approach to the less troublesome.

Although the book's layout is principally concerned with establishing a dialectic, presenting varying views, there is something of a chronology to the

ordering, a near chronology of the profession's changes—process to cohesion to cognition to social construction to ideology. The first two sections present the views that seem to have lasted: writing-as-process, writing as a means of learning, James Kinneavy's aims of discourse, some basic research. Yet even these sections contain some controversial matters: the generalizability of case studies, Frank D'Angelo's ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny (terms you'll come to understand through the reading). The third section looks to the cognitive sciences and developmental psychology, pretty popular till recently. The fourth section addresses that which has compromised cognition's popularity: social construction. It introduces Kenneth Bruffee and something of a counter in John Trimbur; there is also Charles Schuster's reading of Mikhail Bakhtin as informing social construction. Section five looks to the debate over whether freshman composition courses should concern themselves with narration or with academic discourse, with the discourses about and by those traditionally excluded from the academy—women, people of color. Then an important set of postscripts. And so the profession stands, kind of, for the moment.

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For the third edition of *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*, Victor Villanueva recruited the expertise of colleague Kristin L. Arola in order to flesh out the discussion on composition and technology. The quick movement of the paradigm—from the personal computer to local-area networks to the rise of social networking—suggests the need to recall the talk and the cross-talk concerning computers and their products for composition. The award-winning Villanueva and his coeditor Arola have dropped nine essays from the second edition, reoriented others into new sections, and added eight new essays, including six in the new technology section, "Virtual Talk: Composing Beyond the Word."

Amid these changes, the third edition maintains the historical perspective of previous editions while continuing to provide insights on the relatively new discipline of composition studies. Landmark contributions by major figures such as Donald Murray, Janet Emig, Walter Ong, Sondra Perl, Mike Rose, and Patricia Bizzell remain. They are joined by the works of other trailblazing scholars such as Peter Elbow and Richard Ohmann. This edition also incorporates texts by key names within comp's conversations on technology, including Adam Banks, Cynthia Selfe, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. The result is a collection that continues to provide new and experienced teachers and scholars with indispensable insights into the challenges, controversies, and ever-shifting currents within our rich and ever-evolving field.

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