when they are done on a computer. He concludes, "As Danny goes on playing, tinkering with the electronic brain of his computer, it is also tinkering with his." Unfortunately, Costanzo's quest ended before the current emphasis on using networks for collaboration and communication, and so *The Electronic Text* doesn't offer any insight into how these trends will affect tomorrow's students. Perhaps a second journey is on the horizon. In the meantime, Costanzo has written a very good book that will be useful to both novice and expert. He has given teachers a great deal to think about.


Reviewed by Nancy R. Comley, Queens College, CUNY

Chris Anderson uses the term "literary nonfiction" to cover the essay and "New Journalism," or personal and informative writing, respectively. While acknowledging the difficulties of the term, Anderson finds it useful because it "conveys the hybrid nature of the texts we study and thus their paradoxical, threshold, problematic nature." The term also "evokes the two fields we have drawn on: literary criticism, and rhetoric and composition." In fact, thirteen of seventeen contributors concentrate on the essay, with Dillard, Didion, Eiseley, Orwell, Selzer, Thomas, and White receiving most attention; three writers deal with the journalistic or documentary prose of Barich, Crane, and McPhee; and one contributor, George Dillon, discusses everyday discourse. While the emphasis, then, is predominantly on essayists who have already achieved chestnut status in composition readers and rhetorics, some of the critical approaches used do present new ways to read these texts.

In the first section, "Readings," which is meant to provide a "grammar of critical approaches to nonfiction," Charles Schuster leads off with an "aesthetic analysis" of Richard Selzer's prose, and Dennis Rygiel follows with "Stylistics and the Study of Twentieth-Century Literary Nonfiction." Rygiel presents a brief overview of the methodology of practical stylistics and applies it to the first four paragraphs of E.B. White's "Once More to the Lake." Rygiel provides useful strategies for finding out what stylistic devices might be "producing effects such as simplicity, directness, informality" (39). Richard Filloy applies a theoretical approach to Orwell, arguing that "Orwell persuaded not on the strength of an exceptional personality [the mark of the classical rhetor] but on the ordinariness of a commonplace one," while Jack Roundy is concerned with John McPhee's structuring of fact through use of formal devices such as outlining. Mark Allister discusses the work of Bill
Barich in "Writing Documentary as a Therapeutic Act." Suzanne Clark, noting an absence of "feminine detail" in Annie Dillard's work, raises the question whether we can call hers "a woman's voice." (It should be noted that in this collection the male voice is rather predominant.) Phyllis Frus compares the newspaper article, "Stephen Crane's Own Story," with the short story written after it, "The Open Boat," demonstrating that the former shares similar literary devices with the latter, and concluding that the journalistic piece is "no more tied to an empirical reality than is 'The Open Boat.'"

The second section, "Generalizations and Definitions," "examines the genre and theory questions raised by the readings, particularly problems of definition and boundary" (xi). Carl Klaus, in "Essayists on the Essay," turns to the essayists themselves as he attempts to map the boundaries of the essay. Klaus finds that the essayists set the essay off "against highly conventionalized and systematized forms of writing, such as rhetorical, scholarly, or journalistic discourse," stressing the essay's "naturalness, openness, or looseness as opposed to the methodicality, regularity, and strictly ordered quality of conventional prose discourse." However, looseness in the essay is by no means loss of control. As Klaus summarizes it, "The form of the essay will appear to reflect the process of a mind in action, but a mind that is always in control of itself no matter how wayward it may seem to be" (168). Klaus found that the essayists assumed a fictive role as they wrote, a role that is, however, "deeply in tune with their inherent nature." Because of this, the essay is seen as a "profoundly fictive" kind of writing:

It seeks to convey the sense of a human presence, a human presence that is indisputably related to its author's deepest sense of self, but that is also a complex illusion of that self—an enactment of it as if it were both in the process of thought and in the process of sharing the outcomes of that thought with others. Considered in this light, the essay, rather than being the clear-cut, straightforward, and transparent form of discourse that it is usually considered to be, is itself a very problematic form of writing. (173)

As Klaus notes, this definition is at odds with those who make distinctions between "formal" and "informal" essays or "conversational and exploratory" essays as do William Zeiger and others in this collection; some seem to be defining the essay by what has been done to it in composition textbooks. Klaus quotes J.B. Priestley on this matter: "It is a pity that other types of prose composition which could easily be given such a title as 'theme,' 'thesis,' or 'article,' should bear the name [of essay]" (173).

Douglas Hesse ("Stories in Essays, Essays in Stories") argues against textbooks which claim that "narrative essays contain stories that illustrate or prove points." He finds that narrative essays make points "by giving propositions a place in story," emphasizing the persuasive nature of the story, a "persuasiveness inherent in our acceptance of stories." George Dillon, drawing on John Searle's "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," is
concerned with “workaday” prose, analyzing the blurring between fact and fiction in two popular advice books and two academic pieces. Concentrating on the “use of semi-fictionalized accounts of experience and events as evidence,” Dillon shows how personal experience can be manipulated through literary devices for the purpose of persuasion in everyday prose. Peter Elbow sketches some suggestions for presenting voice as a “critical concept,” affirming the ear as “probably our most trustworthy organ of discrimination in writing.” Perhaps so, but only after the ear is well-read and well-trained.

In the third section, “Implications for Pedagogy,” John Clifford leads off with an application of reader-response theory in the classroom to Loren Eiseley’s “The Running Man,” a chapter from his autobiography. John Schilb, in “Deconstructing Didion,” makes a case for the use of poststructuralist rhetorical theory in composition classes, believing, as others do in this collection, that students should be introduced to theory, to terms that can be used in reading their own texts as well as literary texts. Pat Hoy believes in starting with the image in writing of experience, and Jim Corder, in “Hoping for Essays,” presents an essay within an essay in fulfillment of this hope. Finally, Chris Anderson (“Error, Ambiguity, and the Peripheral: Teaching Lewis Thomas”) finds that his use of Thomas’ essays as models subverted his attempts to teach the term paper, for these essays “are an attack on the term paper.” Thus Anderson came to distinguish between essay and article writing. His experience would seem to validate Klaus’ definition of the essay.

_Literary Nonfiction_ presents its readers with critical methodologies ranging from the Arnoldian to the Derridean, and it reminds us of the problem of classifying nonfictional texts. Taken as a whole, the book should encourage more serious critical attention not only to the essay, but also, as George Dillon hopes, “to texts with clear practical purposes,” for in them literariness also abides.


Reviewed by Fred Reynolds, Old Dominion University

Advanced Placement English is one of those things we all should know more about. There are questions about AP that as composition specialists we are expected to help our departments answer. Should we grant college credit for AP courses? Should we waive first-year composition for AP students or, instead, place them in advanced courses? Should we train teachers in secondary pedagogy programs for possible AP teaching assignments? Should graduate assistants, adjuncts, and part-timers teaching students from AP