Leaving town after a visit, two alums of the University of Louisville’s composition program start talking about how much more fun they had preparing for their careers than surviving in them. “We were a little nostalgic and more than a little frustrated as we drove along, remembering how much easier it had seemed to grapple with problems in our teaching and writing as graduate students, where we talked them over with one another around a table in the basement of the Humanities building.” Now they are out on their own, isolated and alienated. They have met the enemy and he isn’t us, but dichotomies—“killer dichotomies,” in fact, that separate reading from writing, composition from literature, teaching from research, form from content, subjective from objective, theory from practice, college professors from high school teachers, the haves from the have nots, the tenured from the part-time, and more.

Their response: to invite a number of serious and like-minded colleagues to pick a dichotomy and explore it, to write “about mediating principles that could put dichotomies into relationship rather than into battle.” “Thinking in thirds, as C.S. Peirce taught us to, became our speculative instrument, our way of transcending the either/or mentality that kept us isolated and frustrated.” The editors want to find the transcendent “third” idea that can unite the oppositions of each dichotomy, that will enable us to negotiate rather than go to war. Then we can move “farther along.”

The twelve articles which follow the introduction explore a number of serious and familiar dilemmas that trouble composition teachers: public versus private writing, training versus educating, writing in school versus writing in the workplace, high school versus college English teaching, reading versus writing, research versus teaching, and even dichotomies versus ethnographies. Among the contributors are Ann Berthoff, who sets us straight on how to negotiate between “Reading In/Reading Out” or right readings versus anything goes; and Joseph Comprone, who argues that we must reject the “monologic literacy” of E.D. Hirsch and commit to the “dialogic literacy” of Freire and Bakhtin. Hirsch comes in for more bashing from Kathryn T. Flannery, who argues for Shirley Brice Heath’s local and interactive notion of literacy education. Ken Autry questions the dichotomies traditionally applied to journal writing—private/public, expressive/transactional, and process/product—and shows that a close look at real journals dissolves such abstract oppositions. “Whether or not they use them for inventing ideas, writers occasionally publish their diaries, journals, and notebooks as if they were finished products.... In a strangely circular process,
the publication of the journal may be the end product of the work it contributed to in the first place. The line between process and product disappears."

The editors in their own contributions tend to be comfortable on very high rungs of the abstraction ladder, sometimes hypostatizing concepts, sometimes even personifying them: "Composition has ignored the subjective sense of 'I' in favor of the socialized 'me'; it continually rejects the personal in order to embrace the publicly authoritative. In order to analyze its own ideological consciousness, composition needs to remember this necessary tension between subjectivity and objectivity." They seem still to be arguing around that table, still believing that a sound philosophical argument will get us out of the basement.

The book is at its best in those articles informed by historical knowledge. Two of the most hard-hitting are Joy Ritchie's "Between the Trenches and the Ivory Towers" and Wanda Martin's "Tenure, Status, and the Teaching of Writing." Ritchie analyzes the cultural assumptions we have accepted that make teachers lower class and professors high class citizens. She outlines the political forces that inform the American educational establishment and "are manifest in English departments where a set of dichotomies—male/female, literature/composition, scholarship/teaching—continue to be reinforced by underlying positivistic thinking and privileged versus inferior hierarchies. . . . The very structures of our discipline, the overt and hidden curricula of English departments, undermine the education of all English teachers, secondary or college." She concludes with resignation that our best bet is to refuse to buy into the power structure: "Standing on the margins, we remove ourselves from a position of ambiguity, of continual striving to be what we cannot be and instead join with people who also stand outside the power structure and who, for that reason, can question established assumptions, envision alternative structures, and work to create new forms of belonging and becoming. It is not a comfortable position."

Martin, writing about the power gap between faculty somebodies and part-timer nobodies, concludes somewhat more hopefully. She is waiting for the great day of reconciliation when English departments turn into centers for the study of texts and their creation. "It is certainly time," she writes, "for English departments to come to grips with present reality, to try to reconcile the roles of research and teaching, reading and writing, creation and interpretation." It certainly is.

Reading this book, one cannot help but be touched that so many serious people have taken the time and the energy to scrutinize the conflicts that beset us, to analyze the sources of our alienation, to try to help us think our way into power and influence. But their call to transform and unite may well ring hollow to the generation that devised composition/rhetoric programs. We know, as like-minded and serious colleagues, that we can think in thirds all the way to Tacoma, but until those in power, those who control budgets,
those who chair departments and administer schools and colleges do likewise, we are mostly moving terms around.

Those who will read this book probably don't need to, and those who do need to read it probably won't. (Could some of it be printed subliminally in *PMLA*?) That so many dedicated professionals have thought about literacy in American education so carefully, so seriously, and with, it seems, so little power or chance of having an impact is hardly uplifting. But take heart and keep reading. These writers give us the courage and the sense of community to stand up and shout, to stay on the margins, to refuse to let ourselves be devalued because of our talents as teachers or our interests as scholars. *Farther Along* is a good book to start the year with, and it may indeed help us move farther along.


Reviewed by Susan C. Jarratt, Miami University of Ohio

In his contribution to this volume, Michael Halloran claims that "writing has been a virtually invisible topic in the material history of modern culture" (155). James J. Murphy makes a significant mark in the inscription of "writing" as a subject of history with this collection of surveys of writing instruction in seven historical periods by an impressive group of scholars. These pieces are all distillations of more detailed and comprehensive work by each scholar, making the volume both an accessible introduction for teachers at all levels and a useful research tool for specialists in the history of rhetoric. With these historical surveys, the authors vividly bring before us the materiality of writing in past times, including discussions throughout of technologies of writing—waxed boards and prickers in ancient Greece, pen-making in the Renaissance. Usher's Forms (that is, lesson plans) from an English grammar school of four centuries ago reproduced here may strike teachers with a thrill of familiarity, along with a painful image of suffering: grammar, desk work, lectures, translation, and examinations from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. with only a break for lunch. The sample of a Princeton student's commencement address from 1772 will reassure alarmists, certain that standards of writing and thinking have declined from a golden age of student brilliance, that our writers today are not so bad.

But these essays are far more than entertaining accounts of lesson plans and technologies. Each contribution repairs another of the shortcomings Halloran cites as a legacy of our recent history: composition work in the last century revealed "little effort to develop a historical context or probe