Book Review

Keywords in Writing Studies, Paul Heilker and Peter Vandenberg (Eds.). Boulder, Colorado: Utah State University Press, 2015.

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Keywords in Writing Studies, the unplanned follow-up of 1996's *Keywords in Composition Studies*, explores the "massive interdisciplinary project" of Writing Studies through the lens of keywords: a set of popularly used but contested terms throughout the field. Writing Studies, being the massive interdisciplinary project that the authors claim, moves in a great many theoretical, methodological, and practical directions, and in doing so the use of terms by authors grows and changes in complementing, conflicting, and contested ways. Paul Heilker and Peter Vandenberg, the editors of this collection, consider the contestation of these terms to be a signal of the healthy vitality of the field: that is, as Writing Studies researchers venture out in new directions, they come to use once-familiar language in new ways to account for what they see from their new vistas, and this new view and new use of language infuses the field with a better understanding of the writing world within which it is caught.

This attempt to account for some of these commonly used keywords comes at an interesting time for a field attempting to study writing: the current rise of various media through which to engage with the written word has caused a vast proliferation of writing, both personal and

professional, and many of the new directions that Writing Studies has branched out in have been attempts to account for this extraordinary change. In their introduction, Heilker and Vandenberg identify three trajectories that the term "Writing Studies" has followed: as a massive interdisciplinary project of the human condition since the dawn of civilization; as an extensive and extending field, with composition as its conceptual center; and as a serious intellectual discipline worthy of professional respect, power, and resources (p. xiv).

This layered understanding of Writing Studies is indicative of the manner in which the entire work comes together. Heilker and Vandenberg's embrace of the variety of the field is clear through their selection of keywords for the work, as their goal was to "listen openly, generously, and carefully to its many, layered voices, echoes, and overtones, especially the dissonant ones" (p. xvi) and represent those voices within the descriptions of the keywords in their texts. Specifically, the keywords they selected had to meet two criteria: they had to be part of the "disciplinary parlance," and they had to be highly contested, at the center of debates about power, identity, and values (p. xvii).

The subsequent keywords and their associated chapters provide a rich and useful set of terms that trace out some of the complexities of the field and, at the same time, use the keyword as a signpost to guide the reader through the many interpretive stances that the text wrestles with. The result is a collection of detailed yet brief descriptions of keywords that Writing Studies researchers can use to more articulately inform their understandings of some of the many directions in which the field is growing.

The keywords are presented in alphabetical order. The organization of each chapter

is driven by the needs of the particular keyword and its development in the field—there is no annoying attempt to force each chapter into a specific format, which makes each keyword easier to understand and work with. Instead, the editors have tied the chapters together through two mechanisms: indexed keywords across chapters, and the presence of similar critical components across chapters.

Each chapter focuses on one keyword, but the discussion of a keyword naturally brings about references—sometimes direct, sometimes indirect—to other keywords in the text. Heilker and Vandenberg have boldfaced these references throughout the texts, which serve as a subtle guide to readers looking to find overlap in the applications of keywords. The boldfaced words are unobtrusive, and any reader attempting to simply read a chapter will not be hindered or irritated by their use.

In addition to the indexed keywords across chapters, the editors and individual chapters have brought a set of critical components to each chapter. Whether this was consciously planned or a natural outgrowth of the aims of the larger *Keywords* project is unclear, but these components are nonetheless effective in keeping the text coherently whole while, at the same time, providing for flexibility to meet the unique needs of each keyword. Each chapter provides a definition (necessarily contested and plural), a review of the emergence of the term, an identification of the patterns of use for the term in the field of Writing Studies, the problems that arise with these uses (as well as the tensions that have emerged from these problems), and the implications of the term's use for the field of Writing Studies as a whole. These components are not presented in a common order across chapters, nor is each component equally attended to in each chapter, but

this is for the best: each keyword has a different history, set of definitions, and implications for the field, and the flexibility of these components and their use across chapters allows the authors to account for that while also providing a sense of coherence across the text for the reader. In order to more meaningfully showcase this coherent flexibility, I will address each of these components in turn.

Each chapter contains within it, of necessity, the definition of the keyword being addressed. These definitions, of course, are necessarily contested for most of the terms. Even the term "Writing Studies," for example, is contested, as the editors highlight three potential pathways of the field before even diving into specific keywords. Within the keywords themselves, the presentations of the definitions vary. Steven Accardi, for instance, begins his chapter on "Agency" with an everyday definition: "As a commonplace, agency signifies the ability or capacity to act" (p. 1). This straightforward definition is later complicated, but the initial definition provides a foothold for the reader for the move into the deeper (and muddier) waters of the use of "agency" in Writing Studies.

Other definitions are not so simply laid out, depending on the needs of the keywords. Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, in her chapter on "Disability," puts forward a federal definition of disability, and follows it with questions (and later research) that challenges the limits of such a definition. Likewise, Morris Young's chapter on "Identity" opens with a series of questions that suggests the very *definition* of the term identity is so fraught with competing claims that it is itself unstable. Morris later uses this instability to suggest several common trends in the uses of identity as a keyword, and the many values that such a term has.

Oftentimes caught up within the definitions of keywords is the review of the emergence of the term. These two usually go hand in hand, as the definition of a term is presented in many chapters as an historically situated phenomenon, excepting cases like "Disability," in which the historical development of the term is of minimal importance once a definition was frozen into place by the federal government. A review of the emergence of the term, however, is often helpful for readers, as it provides information not just about the different uses of the term, but the history behind those different uses. Seeing not just the uses of a keyword but also the historical threads behind those uses is particularly helpful for keywords like "Literacy" or "Genre," whose various uses can seem incomprehensibly varied without careful attention to the historical circumstances from which those uses emerged.

In tune with the history of the emergence of the keywords that each chapter presents is a careful tracing of the many ways in which the term is used in contemporary Writing Studies research. Keywords serve, in the studies referenced, as lenses that are looked through in order to understand a given set of data. Essentially, these chapters provide an overview of what each of these lenses can see in different places, with different data, and as a set of different sorts of theoretical "glasses." Mark Garrett Longaker, in his chapter on "Citizen," encapsulates this well. After pointing out that the word "citizen" is often used in the literature without being deeply investigated, Longaker contrasts several different visions of what it means to be a "citizen:" a communitarian, a publican, and a critic. These different visions are, in turn, connected to the history of the keyword, such as Dewey's conception of the citizen. In essence, Longaker is able to integrate the history of the term with the current uses of it in a concise, clear manner. The in-

teraction of the definition, the emergence of the term, and the contemporary uses of the term are highlighted, structured, and put into conversation with one another as needed to help the author more easily present the keyword as a coherent whole.

The contemporary trends of the term also call forward points of tension and constructive disagreement when using the keyword which, in turn, highlight the limits and possibilities that each term brings with it. These tensions are considered from a variety of perspectives, depending on the term. "Agency" for instance, is considered within the larger lens of modernist/postmodernist tensions, whereas "Class" is considered from its roots through Bourdieu, Habermas, Frieri, and others. Once again, this variety highlights the individuality of each keyword while also providing points of comparison (as well as fluidity from one chapter to the next) for the reader.

The definitions, emergence and usage of the keywords, and tensions among the uses of the keywords are caught up within the larger field of Writing Studies. As an interdisciplinary field, Writing Studies draws from philosophy, classical rhetoric, sociology, anthropology, education, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and literary studies (among many others). These keywords emerge from other fields in many cases, but are primarily considered within the field of Writing Studies. Pender's chapter on "Ideology" provides a wonderful model of this. Pender situates ideology within a Marxist framework and provides a connecting point from Marxist theory to Writing Studies—Althusser. This historical background, however, gives way quite quickly to the work of Berlin, who, Pender argues, was most pivotal in bringing "ideology" to keyword status (p. 94). Berlin then serves, for Pender, as the tip of the spear that dives deeply into the

uses of ideology in Writing Studies. With this organization, Pender is able to indicate interdisci-
plinary connections while, at the same time, providing wide coverage of the specificities of the
keyword's use in Writing Studies.

Keywords in Writing Studies provides a balance of breadth and depth to its keywords that
is beneficial to a wide variety of audiences. *Keywords* is a helpful guide to experienced members
of the field—it provides a rich set of interpretations, applications, and histories to the covered
keyword. It is also helpful for novice members of the field, as it provides a rich overview of the
scope that Writing Studies has to offer, and provides pathways toward an understanding of these
keywords that novices can follow on their way to developing their threshold concepts of this
field. Furthermore, the keywords as they are proposed and used in this text serve as a model for
thinking about Writing Studies as a field: as a set of networked sites of ongoing negotiation for a
variety of complementary purposes.