now, I find little that is new or exceptional in this book; but some of the assignments are interesting, and I do plan on trying them in my classes this semester. As a teacher I can use this book immediately. Bishop provides sample response sheets (derived from composition's peer-review technique), forms for evaluation, a chapter rich with specific invention techniques, and an excellent annotated bibliography.

One final comment: there are entirely too many typographical errors in this book, particularly given that it is a book about writing published by the National Council of Teachers of English. Many are in students' sample works, and maybe that's how the students wrote their assignments; if so, Bishop should have said so. The other goofs are simply the annoying result of sloppy editing.

Reading-to-Write: Exploring a Cognitive and Social Process, Linda Flower, Victoria Stein, John Ackerman, Margaret J. Kantz, Kathleen McCormick, and Wayne C. Peck (New York: Oxford UP, 1990, 269 pages).

Reviewed by Charles Bazerman, Georgia Institute of Technology

This is a serious and complex book deserving serious and complex attention from students of literacy. It explores several important territories, brings to bear a useful set of related research tools, displays and puzzles over a significant set of data, and advances some important concepts. It also has significant limitations, which the authors are aware of and attempt to understand. What they achieve is stronger for being aware of those limitations, for the arguments and results are framed and interpreted in an appropriately complex universe that for the most part saves them from the fragility of reductive over generalization and adds to them the verisimilitude of located experience. A further examination of some of the limitations would only add further to the strength.

The overt subjects of the book, as announced in the title, are how people read when they are confronted with a writing task, and how cognitive and social factors interact within that reading process. Moreover, the major units of the book echo the Reading-to-Write rubric and the attempt to balance cognition and context (which is taken as synonymous with the social, although all context is not just social, and although the social may permeate the cognitive more deeply than the text/context metaphor might suggest—that is, cognition may not just be socially located; it may be socially distributed, socially mediated, and socially constituted). The units are (I) Reading to Write: Understanding the Task; (II) Reading to Write: Cognitive Perspectives; (III) Reading to Write: Social Perspectives; and (IV) Uniting Cognition and Context.

Between opening and closing theoretical chapters by Flower justifying and interpreting the studies, the book presents a set of related investigations that examine how students of varying levels, from first-year undergraduate to advanced graduate, handle an assignment of writing about a set of loosely connected contradictory and incomplete statements, with only vague and contradictory instructions about the goals and task of the assignment. There is little indication of the audience or the stance the students are expected to take. This is a typical poorly designed college assignment, but here the underdetermination and contradictions of the assignment were intentional, designed to see what kinds of strategies and resources the students would bring to this "open-ended, underspecified, and overloaded" writing situation, as Flower calls it.

In the opening exploratory study, Flower has her undergraduate and graduate students keep talk-aloud protocols as they confront this assignment and then make a short presentation on a feature they noted in their writing process. In the protocols, presentations, and ensuing class discussions, students represented the assignment to themselves in different ways; that is, they said they were doing different things and formulated different goals, information-gathering procedures, and writing strategies and textual forms according to what they thought the assignment asked for. The understanding of what the assignment asked for ranged from summary to interpretation, with response, review and comment, and synthesis in the middle. Moreover, Flower found that the complexity of the resulting texts did not necessarily reflect the complexity of the processes by which the texts were written. Sometimes apparently short and simple texts resulted from sophisticated thinking about the assignment.

In the second study, Kantz examines texts and revisions produced by first-year students in order to find the kinds of plans that seemed to be instantiated in the texts, and how well those plans were fulfilled. On first drafts most students chose a summary or a summary and comment plan, but on revision there was a marked increase in interpretive and response plans in both the experimental group and the control group, which was not exposed to a discussion of alternative plans and processes. The increase was even greater in the experimental group. However, Kantz found that among many of the students the overall plan of the essay promised greater coherence and discussion than the substance of the text provided, suggesting the kinds of difficulties students had in transforming the reading materials into new statements.

In the third study, comparing first-year students' perceptions of what they were doing with readers' evaluations of texts, Ackerman found that students often overestimated the ambitiousness of their accomplishment, claiming they were writing syntheses or interpretations, while the readers graded their essays as summaries or responses. This suggests that the students did not always have the means to fulfill their intentions.

By examining the protocols, Stein finds that undergraduate and graduate students have well-rehearsed strategies for dealing with what they consider standard school assignments, and that students tended to reconsider those strategies only when they were faced with some obvious difficulty, forcing them to confront the inadequacy of their standard strategy for the task at hand. In a follow-up study comparing protocols to the consequent texts, Stein found that students elaborated with personal associations far more frequently in their protocols than in their essays, which frequently would have benefited from such elaboration. These elaborations, however, did not just vanish. Rather, they helped students evaluate and think critically about the reading materials, as well as select and build representations of the reading materials.

Peck studies revision processes of first-year students by comparing text changes and protocols of an experimental group (who were given a lecture on alternative task representations and then told to revise to make sure their papers were "interpretive") and of a control group (who were given no instruction and told simply to make their essays better). The experimental group took the revision task more seriously, with over eighty-five percent of the students rethinking their essays rather than just rereading and making local corrections, while only about sixty percent of the controls did. The actual results in text change, however, were less pronounced, with only sixty-five percent of the resulting experimental texts exhibiting a change of plan versus fifty-three percent of the control texts, once again indicating within some students in both groups a failure of means to accomplish intentions.

Two studies consider context. Ackerman examines the protocols of first-year students with specific attention to the opening moves the students make in attempting to define the problem before them. In these opening moves, Ackerman finds the legacy of a lifetime of schooling which has trained the students to understand and approach tasks in standard ways. McCormick, also reexamining the first-year student protocols, finds what she considers three pervasive culturally-induced ideological assumptions: a desire for closure, a goal of objectivity, and an avoidance of contradiction.

In the specifics of data, concepts, and arguments, the book is about the influence of how students think and talk about what they are doing on a school-located writing task requiring reading. Thus, I find the actual themes to be writing-using-reading, situated cognition, and the relationships between cognitive writing processes and textual production, rather than the stated themes of reading-to-write and balancing cognition and context. These may seem like minor shifts in emphasis, but they indicate exactly what the book can and cannot deliver on.

The reasons why these emerge as the core issues in the book are primarily methodological. As Flower recognizes and discusses, all the data are cognitive and textual, and only the arguments concerning cognition and its relation to texts produced are empirically developed. The chapters on context are

largely speculative, using only cognitive data that report on subjects' statements that can be imputed to be culturally conditioned. The methods are either self-report of cognition through protocols, interviews, and other techniques, or textual in the form of holistic scoring and identification of features and text structure. The protocols and texts produced provide few clues to get behind the intentionally obscured social context of current task (see below) to explore what habits and patterns and practices from the students' social and cultural history within and outside schools have conditioned the current choices which they express as their own individual acts. Ackerman and others make plausible but rather broad-stroke common sense suggestions about the influence of prior schooling, but he and his colleagues have no method to verify the obvious inferences nor any method to surface less obvious or more detailed findings. McCormick's guesses about the influence of culture are even more questionable, as a number of common sense rival hypotheses (social, cognitive, and pedagogical) immediately suggest themselves as equally plausible to her ideological analysis, which does not even have the benefit of a systematic ideological critique of the culture she claims is generating cognitive habits generally in disfavor with intellectuals. Perhaps she might get further in her analysis by first examining the rise of the ideology of American intellectual classes.

Moreover, the experimental task has two notable features that make cognition of the separated subject more salient than the linkages and dynamics of an active social situation: (1) although the task provides readings, it is framed primarily on writing; and (2) the experiment uses underdetermination as an essential tool to surface the processes it wants to investigate.

First, the reading material provided to the students is minimal and presents no obvious interpretive problems except those imposed by its scantiness. This material is presented so immediately in conjunction with the writing task that for most students the writing transformations immediately and explicitly dominate. This attention to production over reception (even though the two inevitably and always are intertwined) is exacerbated by the fact that the material for the student is largely self-contained for this assignment, fitting into no more extended discourse network that the student is engaged in. Moreover, the students are presented just scraps and shards of statements, but not strongly developed statements one can seriously locate oneself against. It is a cartoon of a conversation. Thus, we see the students presenting themselves towards a dimly understood social situation of school writing, but not coming out of immediately relevant social situations that condition their self-presentation. Despite the concern for examining how students locate their writing within the situation, the authors present the students mostly alone at their desks. (I want to emphasize that writers do frequently find themselves alone at their desks and many interesting things worth examining happen there, but to investigate that is not to investigate

other things.)

Second, underdetermination and contradiction in the experimental materials and task does, as the authors desire, provide a kind of Rorschach test to see how students handle puzzling situations of just the kind that students are all too frequently presented in school. Moreover, college assignments usually have the further hidden trap, as Flower notes in the conclusion, that while students respond with one set of habits bred from summary and response tasks in lower schooling, college professors are evaluating from another which privileges synthesis and evaluation. Only those students who have somehow understood the task in the way the professor desires, and have discovered the means for accomplishing that task, do well. Thus, social context is confused and difficult for students to read. Signals are mixed and students gain little by gathering more data on a context that is impenetrable to them. Because the social relations of school are so difficult to diagnose once they move beyond simple dominance of authoritarian rote education, it often appears as though school writing is contextless. The same thing happens to the students in this experiment (and at moments even some of the authors make the mistake of thinking of the primary and secondary classrooms as contextless). To most students in the classroom, no context is apparent except the reproduction of the typical contextless-seeming classroom; a few others imagine contexts that might give specific meaning to the task beyond the display of rote learning. But none really can act socially within this situation to try to penetrate the social dynamics here. So the data tell us a lot about cognition of students within typified classroom situations, and little about how those situations are constituted.

The slightly different emphases I give to the book's subjects do not diminish the importance of the book and the related students it reports; they only help define what the studies can and cannot tell us. The book tells us more about writing than reading, and it tells us more about how social and other contextual factors emerge as conscious cognitive issues in a writing task than about developing a theory of the mutual influence of mind and society on each other and literate practices. The book develops from a number of angles the importance of task representation to the process of writing, and it then points to a number of junctures where students seem unable to act on these representations to bring into being the kinds of texts they desire. Although the ultimate psychological status of these task representations remains unclear in the book, operationally treating representations as statements people make about their writing tasks gives us more than enough to go on as writers and writing teachers.

Also useful are the highly detailed pictures the protocols draw of students struggling with common school writing tasks. These portraits alone should awaken us and our colleagues across the curriculum to pay attention to what happens with our students when we ask them with few instructions to locate their academic voices against only sketchily presented literatures

within a classroom situation caught in some indeterminate place between primary school and professional collegiality. More specifically these protocols give us more concrete data for thinking about the pedagogy of writing about reading, an increasing concern within writing pedagogy over the last dozen or so years. This exposure of process helps us think about what kinds of shaping or writing situations and instructional interventions will both challenge students to more skilled performances and provide them the means for successful accomplishment.

I should say though, that this book is better than most in recognizing the extremely strong relationship between writing research and the other major form of publication in our field: textbooks. A few of the textbooks that followed on Mina Shaughnessy's call for instruction about academic writing using reading are cited in passing in this book and clearly stand behind both the selection of writing-about-reading as the research site for these studies and a number of approaches taken here. That is, this book grows as much out of a pedagogical tradition as a research tradition and needs to acknowledge it just for the freedom of its own discussion. It is unfortunate that the deeply ingrained academic practice of not citing textbooks as sources of information, concepts, and approaches has prevented a more open discussion of the ideas that have been developed through the textbook channel of communication, limiting our ability to think openly and carefully about all the resources developing in our field. This is a pervasive problem in our field, and I do not fault this book for coping with the strictures of academic habits. I do wish, however, to open up the question. As a textbook writer, and particularly of textbooks about writing using reading, I am, of course, an interested party. But that is also why I have become so aware of this issue.

Finally, this book also represents a substantial advance in cognitive research, to make it more aware of social and other contexts. As Mary Douglas points out in *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse UP, 1986), it is very hard to keep society in mind when examining cognition, and very hard to keep cognition in mind when examining society. The landscape of the social sciences is littered with these failures of memory. Douglas retells the poignant case of Bartlett, whom many count as the originator of modern cognitive research. Bartlett's seminal research into memory was motivated by a desire to understand how the individual is embedded in social knowledge, but in the course of developing powerful methods to look into the mind, he forgot his social agenda. Flower and her colleagues, working in a tradition growing out of Bartlett, are determined to remember. As their cognitive studies become more located within recognizable and determinable social situations, they give us stronger clues to how people as individual agents are located and locate themselves, how they negotiate their place and construct their social presences. It is not necessary that cognitive studies also study society, only that they remain profoundly aware of it. Conversely, social studies need not investigate cognition, but must remain profoundly aware of

agency. Linda Flower and her colleagues have set an example for all parties in the complex world of writing research as to how we can listen to and talk to each other's concerns.

Nothing Begins with N: New Investigations of Freewriting, ed. Pat Belanoff, Peter Elbow, and Sheryl I. Fontaine (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991, 327 pages).

Reviewed by Mary Ann Merz, Oklahoma City Community College

Let it be known right up front that I thoroughly enjoyed this collection of sixteen essays. It's going to become an important reference source for teachers of composition at all levels, for instructors outside the discipline who encourage their students to write, for graduate directors who advise students concerning theses and dissertations, and, most of all, for graduate students who want an easy-to-read account of the history and numerous uses of freewriting. The footnotes are excellent.

I found the table of contents containing brief abstracts of the contents of each article to be very helpful. Using these abstracts, I chose not to read the book sequentially. Instead, I zeroed in first on Robert Whitney's essay. In a section called "What is My Personal Connection to Freewriting?" in "Why I Hate to Freewrite," Whitney says everything I wish I had said about my early experiences with freewriting: "To force myself to keep going is to disconnect myself from something—an inner sense, meaning, that from which writing is made." Whitney calls his effort "almost freewriting." His article provided the catchy phrase for the book's title. Once, while working with a student who continued to pause in his freewriting effort, Whitney asked the student what he was thinking about. When the student responded, "Nothing," Whitney explained to him that "Nothing begins with an *N*."

In the first section, "What Does Freewriting Look Like?" I liked Sheryl Fontaine's discussion of the advantages of freewriting and its relationship to students' self-concepts and writing improvement. Fontaine presents many student comments on the benefits of freewriting experiences, but the one readers will probably enjoy most came from "one young man [who] claimed far more for the mysteries of the ten-minute freewrite than we may have the expertise to test for; he simply explained, 'sometimes freewriting seems like prayer.'" In the second section, "How Can Freewriting be Used in the Classroom?" I particularly enjoyed Lynn Hammond's "Using Focused Freewriting to Promote Critical Thinking." With close ties to legal writing, and having worked with first-year law students for a number of years, I appreciated her discussion of techniques for helping "freshlaws" learn to write what they mean and mean what they write.