

be done. What Sánchez offers us is a neo-pragmatist nominalism. Such a claim, however, is not necessarily a critique or invalidation of Sánchez's project. That work has not been done here. Whatever disagreements or problems this reviewer has with some aspects of Sánchez's work should not discourage compositionists from engaging a work of scholarship that poses and attempts to address bold and important questions.



Market Matters: Applied Rhetoric Studies and Free Market Competition, ed. Locke Carter (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 2005. 279 pages).

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Locke Carter believes that composition is economically naïve. This edited volume is an attempt to remedy that naïveté and look at writing instruction from an economic perspective. In today's global information economy, economic change increasingly shapes and is shaped by literate practices, and composition is on the front lines of such change. The essays in this volume investigate how composition and its associated disciplines—rhetoric, technical communication, and college English, which Carter collectively labels “applied rhetoric studies”—might better incorporate an economic perspective into theory and pedagogy. Carter (who holds an MBA) is writing from a strong free-market point of view. As the volume's editor and author of its extended lead essay, he offers the fundamental thesis that much of composition theory is strongly Marxist or socialist in orientation, and such an orientation cuts us off from the world's dominant free-market capitalist perspective. Still, the other contributors to this uneven volume offer insights that usefully complicate Carter's laissez-faire perspective. We should understand that one unifying quality to economic

thought is its heterogeneity: from Adam Smith and David Ricardo to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, from Vilfredo Pareto and John Maynard Keynes to Paul Sweezy and Kenneth Arrow, economy means many things. In its illuminations as well as its confusions, *Market Matters* reflects that heterogeneity.

Given concerns of space, I cannot here adequately address the diverse contributions of all the volume's eleven essays; nevertheless, I hope my comments might serve as a usefully metonymic representation. *Market Matters* can be divided into four parts: first, Carter's extended introductory essay; second, a section examining the possibilities and problems that various economic paradigms offer applied rhetoric studies; third, a section examining several sites of application of economic approaches to applied rhetoric studies; and finally, a section examining the implications of those economic approaches for the day-to-day practice of writing instruction.

Carter begins by emphasizing the value of higher education in today's global information economy and by critiquing the way in which “our pedagogical, critical, and curricular stance is outside the economy” (3). This statement requires amending: our discipline is hardly separate from or exterior to economy; however, like higher education in general, it has too often rhetorically constructed itself as such and thereby limited its horizons of application. Because they deal with the creation and exchange of information and the deployment of persuasive strategies to facilitate buying and selling, markets themselves are deeply rhetorical. However, Carter makes a problematic logical leap: since economic markets are inherently rhetorical, he proposes, we should also agree that rhetorical transactions are inherently market transactions. In other words, any rhetorical interaction commodifies meaning and exchanges it (in units that carry agreed-upon communal value) for something else in a for-profit transaction. Part of the error here lies in the conflation of value with market value and the assumption that a thing is worth only the market price for which one can sell it.

Carter also problematically conflates Marxism with socialism, which rather muddies his argument, particularly when he attempts

to restrict the definition of economic value to the value exchanged in market-based transactions. As he puts it, “*value means market value*” (7). Marxist analyses, however, demonstrate many forms of economic transaction beyond that of the for-profit commodified market exchange. Powerful examples of such transactions can be found in the communal and value-sharing practices of the Mondragón Cooperative System in Spain, one of Europe’s largest producers of auto parts, machine tools, and household appliances. Still, Carter’s account of how market value functions is lucid and compelling, and his attention to the implications that the strong link between economy and information technologies holds for applied rhetoric studies is important, albeit underdeveloped. If market value is that “which economists define as the most anyone would pay or exchange for a service or a good, given enough information in the marketplace” (7), how does one account for the information commodities (learning, texts) that are at the center of Carter’s argument when one cannot know their value until they are consumed? (Economists call this the “experience good” problem.) The difficulty here lies in a monolithic construction of value: if one can’t pay cash for something, it’s worthless, and although Carter admits in passing to other forms of value, they are not discussed. In fact, “nothing in the vast humanistic expansion of the communication disciplines provides for the entrepreneurial mindset. To be an entrepreneur is to take risks, to produce things, to make deals, and these activities are not found in the vocabulary that describes what we do as communicators” (39). Some may take issue with Carter’s position here, particularly those who have seen students exploring risky rhetorical positions, producing texts, and collaboratively negotiating and producing knowledge.

The essays in the following section focus on the problems and possibilities that various economic paradigms offer applied rhetoric studies. Fred Kemp, like Carter, privileges the “entrepreneurial.” However, his impressive account of how the romantic and anticapitalist sentiments often associated with English departments arose out of economic changes wrought by the industrial revolution is strikingly similar, in both the clarity of its insight and the strength of

its conclusions, to the thoroughly Marxist account offered by Raymond Williams. While Kemp indicts Marxist perspectives along with Arnoldian aestheticizing perspectives for the way they hold English departments back from adapting to economic and cultural change, his argument has significantly Marxist characteristics. Kemp then uses the work of management guru Peter Drucker to argue for a more diverse, forward-looking, and adaptable English department as a counter to the static (and stagnating) Arnoldian perspective.

Keith Rhodes uses certain philosophical strands of American pragmatism following Charles Saunders Peirce as a foundation for his impressive application of quality management principles to composition pedagogy and theory. Arguing that quality management principles (likely familiar to some readers as Total Quality Management, or TQM) owe a direct intellectual debt to Peircean pragmatism, Rhodes emphasizes the importance of the productive work performed by students-as-composers while steering carefully away from the “reductive ‘bottom-line’ and dehumanizing thinking like that which is so often being done in [quality management’s] name within education” (102). In fact, Rhodes continues, “quality management, like pragmatism, asks us to value the social aspect of human endeavor: to seek after changes in systems, not in personnel; to recognize both the inevitability of human fallibility and more-than-corresponding value of human creativity; and above all, to escape the habitual seeking after getting it right every time to permit a more productive seeking after making it reliably good, then better” (102). Such notions sound remarkably similar to the goals expressed by Donald Murray, Walker Gibson, and other early proponents of the process movement in composition instruction. Instead of fearing the incursion of capitalistic, business-oriented practices into composition, Rhodes suggests, we might develop a fuller awareness of those practices in order to productively deepen their conceptions of value.

The following section investigates some of the various sites where economic approaches to applied rhetoric studies function. Michael Salvo’s essay opens the section with a working-through of

Kenneth Burke's analysis of the contrasting capitalist and communist attitudes towards symbolic monetary value, demonstrating how the value of information is dependent upon the social construction of that value. Salvo makes careful distinctions between communism and Marxism and suggests that Marxist critique can, indeed, operate within the context of a capitalist economy. Capitalism, as our contemporary economic system, is far from monolithic: it comprises a diversity of forms of transaction, and Salvo indicates that a perspective that sees value only in commodified market transactions is problematically myopic. One has to admire Locke Carter's editorial open-mindedness for including Salvo's trenchant and carefully reasoned essay in this volume, since it seems to offer a strong counter to Carter's perspective.

Salvo's essay isn't without its problems. His reading of Marx through Burke leads him to ask, "How else can things and ideas be valued, if not in market terms? Can things have value in terms other than the economic market?" (115). That second question performs Carter's problematic conflation of market and economy, and again I'm impelled to point out: they aren't the same thing. Economic transactions encompass many more forms beyond the commodified market transaction, and in fact, time-use studies have demonstrated that market transactions account for *less than half* of all economic activity. However, this confusion seems to emerge, in large part, from the contemporary uncertainty over what constitutes labor in today's global information economy, and Salvo sees such uncertainty as useful: the way Burke and Marx defamiliarize capitalism is essential to deepening the understanding that applied rhetoric studies brings to capitalism.

H. Brooke Hessler uses Burke as well. Burke's rhetorical "scape-goating" process, she argues, can be productively applied to the for-profit (and famously profitable) University of Phoenix in order to help illuminate the relative valuation of various economic practices in academia. The University of Phoenix gets scapegoated because it represents "the adoption of businesslike priorities and behaviors by an academic institution," including "the growth of vocational and pre-professional curricula, an increasing emphasis

on efficiency . . . , and the development of entrepreneurial partnerships between academic and nonacademic organizations" (136), priorities and behaviors that, as Fred Kemp's essay points out, make many academics deeply uncomfortable.

Hessler performs a side-by-side comparison of the rise of corporatization in American higher education in general with the evolution of the University of Phoenix, and the synchronicities are illuminating. Academics' rhetorical scapegoating of the University of Phoenix for its corporate practices is deeply hypocritical, as more conventional institutions of higher education increasingly adopt those same practices. In fact, Hessler suggests, we can use this hypocritical scapegoating to explore the rhetorical divisions typically drawn between corporatizing practical instruction and the more conventional model of liberal education, and by examining the problematic qualities we associate with the University of Phoenix, we can better define our understanding of the scope and character of liberal education.

The book's final section asks how, specifically, free-market approaches might be enacted in applied rhetoric studies and what their consequences might be. The answers vary rather widely. Susan Lang's detailed explanation of the overhaul of Texas Tech University's first-year writing program that began in 2002 leads the section, and if the March 2006 debate over the TTU system on various listservs is any indication, the practices Lang describes will likely strike many readers as controversial. According to Lang, there were "irreconcilable labor issues" (187) within the TTU system, including overworked and inexperienced graduate student instructors, a perceived lack of "objectivity" (193) on the part of those instructors, and significant systemic inefficiencies. Efficiency, of course, is one of the chief concerns associated with contemporary capitalist economies, and the remedy TTU found for those "irreconcilable labor issues" would look quite familiar to Frederick Winslow Taylor: they set up a division of labor between "document instructors" (that is, graders) and "classroom instructors." Instead of the cohort model, where one instructor is responsible for both responding to student writing and leading work in the

classroom, instructors at TTU develop experience responding to student writing outside the classroom for a semester or two before moving into the classroom to work directly with students, and the two tasks are kept separate.

It's not my place in this review to evaluate the workings of the TTU system. From Lang's account, and accounts others have offered elsewhere, it works well. Other nationally recognized first-year writing programs do quite well with the cohort model, which may cause some readers to raise their eyebrows in response to Lang's attempt to generalize from TTU's experience. "The cohort model," Lang proposes, "was becoming progressively less capable of delivering a comparable, quality experience to the first-year writing students (if, indeed, it ever has been capable of doing so)," and "this situation is by no means localized to TTU; writing programs nationwide suffer the same erratic instruction" (202). Certainly, the division of labor may increase pedagogical efficiency for some writing programs, and clearly efficiency is an important value at TTU.

However, efficiency isn't the only value in higher education, as Kristine Hansen's concluding essay forcefully argues: "We must certainly be aware of the economic value of education and acknowledge that we help to prepare students for economic life," she recognizes; however, we must "also provide students with other values besides the ability to earn money" (263). Yet writing programs are experiencing increasing competition from the radical increase of high school AP programs, online education, and other sources, and that increased competition results in the commodification of writing instruction. After detailing the functioning of this commodification, Hansen proposes partnerships between secondary and postsecondary education institutions in order to help students prepare not only for the world of work but for broader spheres of value as well. In short, while education today is increasingly commodified, instructors who work in applied rhetoric studies need to resist that exchange-based market perspective wherein we translate our knowledge into grades and diplomas in exchange for students' time and tuition.

In the volume's lead essay, Carter argues that his market perspective can help "add balance" (47) to applied rhetoric studies, and indeed Hansen's concluding essay certainly seems to balance Carter's perspective. It's interesting, though, to see from whom Carter himself takes his perspective: for economic authority, he cites strong proponents of laissez-faire capitalism such as Nobel Laureates Milton Friedman and Friedrich August von Hayek, while ignoring development economists and fellow Nobel Laureates Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz. (Carter also prominently cites Deirdre McCloskey; however, McCloskey is more accurately characterized as an economic historian rather than an economist.) Friedman, of course, authored the famous statement that "the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits." Sen and Stiglitz argue strongly for other forms of responsibility, other forms of value, as does Kristine Hansen when she proposes that "education is now inextricably linked with economic goals, both at the individual and the national levels. But economic success by itself is hollow, for either individuals or nations, if the intellectual, personal, and social values long associated with education are not cultivated as well" (268). Ultimately, Carter's perspective in the first chapter seeks to defend that which has scant need of defending: market capitalism is the economic system of the world today. Those other values cited by Hansen, though, when coupled with the commodified exchange of market-based transactions, can offer a rich and diverse heterogeneity of value. We ought to understand, with Carter, how market value stands in relation to other forms of value; however, we also ought to understand that valuing markets alone leaves us poor indeed. Both of these understandings compel more rigorous attention to the economies of writing instruction, and like Carter, I believe that an economic perspective can help those who work in composition and its associated disciplines develop a sorely needed understanding of the increasing link between economics and the practice of literacy.