

scholarship: general semantics, new materialism, the new rhetoric, ordinary language, semiotics, symbolic forms, and symbolic interactionism. The chapter demonstrates that, while these diverse theories and theorists have produced no “common conception” (234), meaning remains a common, if complex, concern. In chapter 11, Ronald C. Arnett employs the concept of “communicative meeting” to frame an “impressionistic picture” (268) of how communication scholars have navigated the ethical assumptions that (1) we have responsibility for Others and (2) relationships with Others matter. Arnett concludes that a “tenacious hope” rather than a “Panglossian optimism” should continue to motivate work on how people encounter one another in communication.

This collection will be most useful for communication scholars, though it could also enable scholars outside NCA to better grasp the sometimes bewildering variety within the communication field. The book seems at times like a curated collection of alternative histories and at times like a grab bag. William F. Eadie supports this impression in his afterword, when he concludes the essays “represent a diverse collection of how a historical approach can be used to explain a discipline” and yet “the parts remain parts, and there is little connection among them” (295). The book supplies plentiful evidence of the fundamental instability of all academic disciplines, through which disciplinarity must always “be respected and devoutly pursued, but endlessly deferred” (2).

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*After the Public Turn: Composition, Counterpublics, and the Citizen Bricoleur.*

By Frank Farmer. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2013; pp. xi + 182.  
\$26.95 paper; \$20.00 e-book.

In their staging of dyadic conversations between rhetorical scholars in English and communication studies, the organizers of the 2014 Rhetoric Society of America conference paired Professor Frank Farmer from the University of Kansas and Professor G. Thomas Good-

night from the University of Southern California on the topic of “Publics, Publicity, and Critical Citizenship.” A scholar on the topics of voice, style, listening, dialogue, and pedagogy, Farmer pulls these and other themes together in his compelling *After the Public Turn: Composition, Counterpublics, and the Citizen Bricoleur*. Farmer forwards the “citizen bricoleur” as an exemplar of contemporary critical citizenship. The citizen bricoleur, further exemplified by the countercultural figure of the zine maker, may call for us to change the ways in which we cultivate critical citizens(hip) in our classrooms. In the introduction, Farmer marks the *public* turn as one of the more recent eruptions of intellectual inquiry in composition studies and diagnoses why specific theories about *counterpublics* were late and unevenly taken up among composition scholars. Advocating more robust uptake, his introduction sketches the appeal of theorizing classrooms as counterpublics, conceptualizing composition studies as a “liminal counterpublic” (21) and attending more carefully to “*cultural publics*” (19).

In chapter 1, Farmer forays through de Certeau, Hebdige, and Lévi-Strauss to flesh out the political and cultural characteristics of the citizen bricoleur. This figure is revealed to be “an intellectual activist of the unsung sort, thoroughly committed to, and implicated in, the task of understanding how publics are made, unmade, and remade, and made better, often from little more than the discarded scraps of earlier attempts” (36). The chapter then briefly historicizes zines as underground, alternative media, moving briskly to the genre of punk zines and their cultivation of an anarchic worldview. Farmer’s account of how punk culture will map onto an account of citizens(hip) as cultivated in higher educational classrooms unfolds slowly. As “a politics of sensibility rather than one of enunciated principles and propositions” (44) in which “conventional ideas of what counted as proper discourse were negated, so the politics that emerged was, by mainstream standards, flailing, inarticulate, contradictory, and unnamable” (44), punk anarchism is narrated as a participant in an ongoing critique of the very concept of citizenship. The work of Amy J. Wan offers the keystone supporting the arch between anarchist punk culture and democratic citizenship. Farmer queries: “What would a punk-inspired pedagogy entail” (42)? Against a punk annihilation or total negation, Farmer affirms the “tac-

tical, improvisational, appropriative” qualities of punk in the service of “transformation” (42).

In the spirit of Jim McGuigan’s work on the cultural public sphere and in direct admiration of Michael Warner’s version of counterpublics, Farmer’s focus on culture in chapter 2 is meant to open the concept of counterpublic to wide swaths of oppositional communicative action beyond rational-critical debate. Through reference to Warner and the emergence of riot grrrl zines in the 1990s, sexuality, gender, race, and other forms of difference are shown to matter as resources for the crafting of alternative, oppositional claims, styles, and worlds. Affirming the validity of zines as cultural texts, cultivating zine reading as a style of literacy, and, even further, facilitating composition students’ production of their own zines optimize conditions for “a new kind of citizen” (67).

Zines and zine culture may be readily recognizable as and exemplary of counterpublics and “cultural publics”—less so academic disciplines like composition studies. Thus, the main goal of chapter 3 is to make a case for something that seems dissonant or straining, if not impossible—“disciplinary counterpublics.” In an account of the entailments of “going public” as a metaphor for certain types of academic labor, public intellectuals, experts and consultants, and activists appear as three familiar modalities, yet each modality is argued to have its dilemmas or failures. The reader might quibble here: Farmer’s account of the dilemmas or failures seems overly tidy, and certainly in today’s academy we are inspired (by working at universities with explicit public- or service-oriented missions) or urged (by working at universities where grant funding is expected as a way of extending the public reach or impact of one’s work) to go public. The murkiness of this account clouds the introduction of a fourth type of academic-as-citizen-bricoleur—“those who locate their work within the ‘groves of academe’ but who desire that their contributions not remain there” (106). The work here is preparatory for the clearer and stronger case Farmer makes in the subsequent chapter. There he takes up the repeated critiques against composition training in the academy, and he advocates as a fourth way of going public the labor of defending composition studies in public. When others disparage or misrepresent us, he intones, “composition may find it useful to *act in counterpublic ways*—to function as a counterpublic among larger publics, most of which, as is increasingly obvious, do not understand us the same way we understand ourselves” (138).

Defending composition studies in public may take the style of “rational-critical debate or deliberation” (142) that resides in Nancy Fraser’s account of counterpublicity, but it must enact other cultural forms if it is to remain true to the spirit of the improvisational citizen bricoleur tactically employing the resources of her cultural publics.

But back to chapter 3. Through discussion of three cases in architecture, science and technology studies, and teacher education, Farmer proves the fact of disciplinary counterpublics. To those who work in and with counterpublic theory, Farmer’s central gift here is his correction to the record that names Rita Felski as the first author to use “counterpublic” in English-language scholarship in her 1989 book. He digs into earlier work by Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren in 1987 on “Teacher Education as a Counterpublic Sphere.” Because Giroux and McLaren do not define counterpublic or cite Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge on the concept, Farmer is left to perform a kind of reverse engineering of what they meant and why they found it compelling to imagine teacher education as a counterpublic activity. Farmer’s labor here is diligent, careful, and splendid. Notably, he discerns six distinct ways in which Giroux and McLaren make use of the counterpublic concept to illuminate the radical potentialities of teacher education (115). Here, Farmer offers an important contribution to the genealogy of this concept.

Farmer takes leave through an extended (and clever and illuminating) illustration of Occupy Wall Street (OWS). What initially seems like an “of-the-2013-moment” exemplar of counterpublicity that is now past its prime (an example that seems to have little to do with composition pedagogy) turns out to pull together key pieces of Farmer’s interesting puzzle. Avoiding a reductive account of the origins of OWS, he notes that OWS was catalyzed by the media presence of *Adbusters*—which began its life as a zine. This chain of influence reinforces the potentiality of zines to cultivate social change—not necessarily only by themselves but, as zine scholar and producer Alana Kumbier notes, as elements within a larger constellation of oppositional media texts, events, practices, and relations. How, then, could we cultivate social change if we taught zine reading and zine making in our classrooms?

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